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AUG. 1914 Vol. 8 No. 4

# DICK ANTHONY of ARRAN

## THE SWORD OF ISKANDER

### by Talbot Mundy

THE Anthonys were ever an untamable breed, unbowed by circumstances, and though the last but one, the present laird, was a sport from the true type, Richard, the last of all of them, was the most uncompromising, the most indomitable of the lot. He carried his head as a king should want to, and was the instant enemy of anything that blustered.

When black clouds gathered and all the signs pointed to foul weather, Dick Anthony was at his best; it brought out the fight in him. A storm to him gave promise of fast sailing with a tight sheet and a steady helm. Thunder meant clearing of the air. And, never a man of very many words, he said least at times when many other men talk most.

So, since babbling brooks boil loudest 'round the rocks, his uncle, Major Wallace Anthony, strode up and down the room and damned him by a dozen Highland devils and as many English ones.

"Failed!" he swore for the dozenth time. (Richard was keeping count.) "A fool, fat-headed, failed civilian, over-age to pass examinations! Bah! God pity you!"

So far as age and a certain failure went the indictment was exactly true, and Richard held his peace. He leaned with his back against the table and both hands resting on its edge—insolently lackadaisical—smiling with the humorous patience that so exasperated any one who did not like him. There were few who did not like him, but he knew how to make them very angry.

He looked much the less fat-headed of the two. As the sun burst through banking clouds a moment and shone behind him through the mullioned window it lit up his tawny hair and made his head seem cleanly chiseled out of gold. It shone past him, too, into the eyes of Major Anthony, showing up lines that meant high living—contrasting has-been strength with strength, firm outline with incipient rotundity—as the sun's disconcerting manner is. The

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Major had to turn his head and blink before he could resume.

"First failed for the Army—now failed for the Civil Service! What's the good of you—the earthly good? The first Anthony in thirteen generations not to be a soldier or a ruler! An education wasted — good money thrown away—result what? Failed, by the two-tailed devil of Dunalaistair! Failed twice! What next, pray? What are you here for?"

"To talk business," smiled Richard, in no apparent hurry to begin. "I didn't fail —the first time—for the Army; I missed."

"What's the difference?" snapped his uncle. "What was a would-be soldier doing in a boat so near examination-time? Eh? Hurt yourself, eh? Broke a leg, eh? Couldn't attend, eh? That's a nice story for an Anthony to tell! A pretty—a characteristic story! I suppose that's how the Duke of Wellington won the Battle of Waterloo, eh? Couldn't attend, I suppose! Wasn't there! Huh! *A very pretty story!* And what next?"

"I don't believe there's a case on record," smiled Dick, "of a man being educated for the Army and then passing for the Indian Civil. If so, the man's a freak. I'm not a freak."

"You're a failure!" snapped his uncle.

Dick smiled exasperatingly. Always—even when a little boy—he had been adept at drawing the other fellow's fire. He could wait, and wait, and wait until the other fellow overstepped himself; but then there would be a flurry.

"What good are you?" demanded Major Anthony. "What good to anybody? How will you justify the room you take up in the world? What can you do?"

"I have to thank circumstances," smiled Richard, "I can swim. I know Persian—Hindustani—French—more than a little Arabic—I'm up in ancient and modern history—know something of military tactics—I can ride——"

"Any of that get you a living?" snarled the Major. But Richard was amused, and saw fit to enumerate.

"I'm in excellent health"—(he could feel the young blood racing in his veins, and his eyes, that had so many colors in them, sparkled as his uncle's could not)—"and I can sail a boat against any man I ever met."

"That's it!" swore his uncle, blowing up with rage. "Sail a boat! That's all you can do! That's all you own beyond a suit or two of clothes! Sail a boat!"

"I mean to," said Richard. "I'm only waiting — for you — to talk — business — first."

A man who had been at school with him and had seen him fight or play three-quarter-back in a losing game would have recognized the danger now, and have summoned caution. But his uncle floundered straight on into a direct encounter there could be no dodging.

"What business? Balderdash! What d'you think *I'll* do for you?—A failure!—A disgrace to the Anthonys! There has been too much good Anthony money squandered on you, sir! Not one penny! Not one ha'penny!"

Dick laughed outright, still leaning back and still disgustingly at ease. Had his laugh been forced it would have pleased his uncle; but it was not forced. It was manly—free—unmusical as always—eloquent of disregard.

"What the devil do you see to amuse you?"

Dick laughed again in three glad, random keys. His eyes lit with laughter as they rested on the family motto, carved deep below the coat of arms in the black oak of the Elizabethan mantelpiece:

"Agree with thine adversary quickly." Dick looked like the spirit of agreement of a certain kind. Wisdom would have urged agreement with him.

His uncle read the meaning of the laughter now, and showed the first symptoms of awakening mistrust. Dick was no taller and no heavier; each of them stood the merest fraction under five feet eleven inches, and each was lean-limbed and muscular. They were at exactly equal distances from either end of the low, beamed room, with the huge old fireplace to Richard's right and the portraits of dead-and-gone Anthonys to his left.

Yet, Major Anthony felt small, and at a disadvantage, and a great deal nearer to a wall. He looked into Dick's eyes, which were exactly on a level with his own—and flinched.

He had to say something. Dick's silence was too strong for him.

"YOU'RE disinherited! It's automatic. The estate provided for you while there was a chance to pass an examination. That ceased when you failed for the Indian Civil. To inherit, an

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Anthony must enter one or other of the Services. You know that. You failed. What are you here for? What's the nature of the business?"

There was no gainsaying the assertion; it was based on the well known wording of a famous will, and every Anthony had complied with it. But Dick folded his arms as if about to state an unanswerable case.

"I'll support no able-bodied man!" snapped his uncle, misinterpreting the attitude.

"Did you ever fight one?" wondered Dick.

"What d'ye mean?"

Major Wallace Anthony sprang back two paces, two shades paler, but Richard did not move.

"I'm giving you your choice." Richard also was speaking very slowly. "You fight, or you pay me a thousand pounds; a thousand pounds was provided in the will for every Anthony in line of succession on entering any of the Services. I want that thousand."

"You want——! I've heard of impudence!" his uncle stammered. "I've heard of nerve—but——! What d'ye mean? You can't get into any of the Services—you're too old to pass—you're a back number—what d'ye mean?"

"The Territorials," smiled Dick, "were not invented, were they, when that will was written?"

"No, sir, they were not. Much good they'd do you in any case!"

"I've taken Counsel's opinion," said Dick, "and I'm assured that a commission in the Territorials will count. There's a thousand pounds for every Anthony in line on getting his commission."

"I'll take care you don't get a commission, even in the Volunteers!" crowed his uncle. "The War Office ask for references. They investigate. They'll apply to me for information. I've only got to mention this little attempt at blackmail! Blackmailers don't get commissions!"

"This," said Dick, drawing a parchment from his pocket, "is my commission in the Territorials. Care to read it?"

"It's a lie!" swore the Major, seizing it and crumpling it between his fists.

Then he uncrumpled it and read it, and flung it back at Dick.

"It's a trick! It's a damned rat-lawyer's scheme! As present beneficiary—with all that that involves—" (He winced as Dick laughed. It was notorious that while the Major's present wife lived there could be no son and heir.)—"I shall consider it my duty to fight! It's a sheer attempt at imposition—robbery! No such thing as the Territorials was contemplated in the will—no, sir—no such thing—and I shall fight!"

"You either fight or pay," smiled Richard without moving.

"What d'ye mean?"

"I mean I'm entitled to the money, and I've come for it. Don't answer yet. Listen! Just before old MacDougal died he told me how much you paid him to break my leg *by accident*. He quoted your actual words. 'If he's not there, MacDougal, at examination-time, there'll be a hundred pounds for you.' He showed me the actual hundred—the actual bank-notes you gave him. He offered them to me. His son Andry has the hundred now; he knows where it came from and for what, and he has tried to get me to take it."

The Major's jaw dropped, but he spun on his heel in an attempt to bluster.

"I'll thrash you for old MacDougal's sake if you try to make him out a liar!" laughed Dick. "I've found you out! If MacDougal had told me sooner, I'd have seen through your advice to begin cramming for the Indian Civil. I ought to have known it was impossible, and I blame myself to that extent; but what you said seemed so dashed disinterested, and you raised such a wail about the honor of the Anthonys, that I listened. Of course I understand now that you deliberately encouraged me to do what you believed impossible, and you made matters more sure by bribing my tutor!"

"What mare's nest is this?" his uncle spluttered.

"He admitted that you bribed him, and I thrashed him for it just three weeks ago today. He and I are quits. He put the admission in writing and I had it witnessed; my lawyer has it now."

The Major said nothing, thoughtfully. An officer—presumably a gentleman—found out at such expedients for saving money, is perhaps wiser if he does say nothing.

"Under the circumstances," continued Dick, "I applied for a commission in a hurry, and saw a lawyer. I know where I am and where you are. I've come for that thousand, and I'll take it now or fight—now, understand—not tomorrow or the day after—now! And I give you from now exactly

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five minutes to come to a decision! No, don't try to leave the room—I've got my eye on the bell, too—thirty seconds are up! Think, man—you'd better think!"

After one wild glance around him for a way of escape Major Wallace Anthony sat down and thought deliberately. The stake he had played for had not been a very big one—a mere thousand pounds in cash, and four hundred pounds a year—but he had played for it with underhanded patience of the kind that legacies and jealousy and barren wives give being to. It went hard with him to have to admit that he had lost after spending two hundred pounds in bribes—on a fisherman who did not use the money, and on a tutor who very likely would have accepted less.

His eye wandered to that motto in the oak of the mantelpiece: "Agree with thine adversary quickly." He knew young Richard's habit when his word was passed, and realized that if he tried to equivocate or spar for time the thrashing sure to be administered would take him weeks to recover from.

And he considered the legal side of things. He had overlooked that Territorial possibility. The case would be at least strong enough to tempt the lawyers, and costs would come out of the estate.

"I'll pay," he said quietly, pulling out his check-book, just as Dick snapped his watch shut. "It's extortion, but I'll pay."

Dick watched him write the check, and watched him write and sign a letter to the Lamlash bankers in confirmation of it.

"Now I'm off," he said, putting both into his pocket. "You'll pay my four hundred a year to my lawyer, or he'll be after you to know why. There's only one thing more before I go—the sword—I'm heir—I've a right to it—I want it."

"No," said Major Wallace Anthony.

"Possession," said Dick, walking to the mantelpiece, "is nine points of the law."

HE TOOK down a wonderful old claymore, basket-hilted, with a beryl set in the top of the hilt, and characters etched rather rudely down the blade. It had no scabbard; and though the blade had been kept polished by almost unnumbered generations, the weapon looked older than the mantelpiece.

"I'll take it with me," said Dick, "and if you want it back you'll have to fight for it —except on one condition, of course. The day a direct heir is born I'll bring it back, if I'm at the other end of the world. Failing an heir—remember the written evidence I hold against you—and—don't—let—me—catch—you—again! Good day!"

Holding the strange sword by the blade, he strode out, straight up the road to Lamlash. Before he was half way to the island-locked harbor he seemed to have forgotten the low, slate-roofed mansion of his ancestors that snuggled in the hills behind him—to have forgotten its occupant—to have forgotten that he was heir to anything except the freedom of the earth and sea.

Walking like a king and utterly unconscious of it, he kept his eyes fixed ahead to where a few yachts and a crowd of fishing-boats lay huddled under Holy Island's shelter, moored snug against the gathering storm. Soon he began to whistle. There were footsteps hurrying behind him—big, heavy, crunching ones—but he took no notice of them. It needed a touch at his sleeve to arouse him from smiling day-dreams.

"Where away, Mr. Dicky, sir?"

The voice and the accent were a Scotsman's, speaking English with the prideful accuracy of learning newly won. The speaker strode Anak-like in pipe-clayed gaiters, and swung the kilt and sporran of a Highland regiment. The sight of the uniform produced more pang in Dick's inside than any of his uncle's sneers had done, and his smile faded as he faced about.

"Where are ye goin', sir?"

"Away, that's all," said Dick. "Just away."

"Ye have the sword, I see. I'm glad ye have it. Ye'll be goin' in the yacht?"

Dick nodded.

No two greater contrasts, judged superficially, ever stood and eyed each other. No two men ever owned between them more of the extremes of strength, physical and mental, but showed the strength in ways more different. There were certain resemblances, for both were red-headed, although Dick Anthony was tawnier than red; Andry MacDougal owned a poll that would have graced an Angus heifer fresh from grass. Both men looked active. Both men stood on springs. Both men had humor, and both mouths were evidently meant to smile with. But there the likeness ended, except that both men were good to look at; blue serge suit

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and plain straw hat or not—sporran and kilt and plaid or not—a woman would have turned to look twice at either of them, and a man three times.

Andry was six full inches the taller of the two, and looked even bigger in his uniform. If regularity of feature makes for beauty he was hideous; he was handsome if a man may be handsome and have freckles and break all the other rules. But though he stood as a drilled man does—as a proud man should—straight, unafraid, and deferent—he looked no stronger and no more attractive than the gentleman who stood at ease and eyed him with such quiet confidence.

"I joined the Ar-r-my to serve ye, Mr. Dicky. I've that hunner' pound ye won't accept, an' I'll not gi'e it to y'r uncle. Speakin' o' him, I've twa sets o' fingers ready noo to tear his thrapple oot at a word from ye! I'm at y'r service, Mr. Dicky, sir."

"Not at all," said Dick promptly. "You're at the King's service."

Andry made a huge grimace, expressive of disgust a Southron could never rise to.

"I'll deser-r-t at one word from ye!"

"If you do, I'll hand you over to the police the first second I set eyes on you!"

"Man, I believe ye! Where are ye goin', Mr. Dicky? Where awa'?"

"Africa — Tunis—Algeria—Egypt—anywhere."

"Alone?"

"Of course."

"Tak' me!"

"No."

All that Andry MacDougal knew of Africa was that it was sinful, and that black men lived there. On the little schoolhouse map in Lamlash he remembered Africa as yellow and immense; on the map in the regimental schoolroom it was red, though, and immenser, which was disconcerting, although due no doubt to military machinations. He was disposed to believe that the red represented blood. He shook his head solemnly a moment.

"Aweel," he said then, "ye wash often." There was a pause while they eyed each other, Dick uncompromising, Andry recognizing fact. "Ye can carry ten days' water —maybe fourteen days'. An' there's a map in barracks. I'm gaun' back to barracks; ma leave's up—I'll no forget where ye're gaun'. Here's a Godspeed to ye!"

Forgetful of his uniform, he held out a great fist like a club with hairs and freckles on it. Then he remembered and changed to a salute. Dick reached his own hand out (and it was only very little whiter); Andry seized it, and was satisfied. He was stubborn wrath-of-God-weaned Covenanter to his iron backbone, and he had paid no wet tribute to emotion since he left his mother's knee, but his eyes ran water. Dick Anthony could squeeze hard when he chose.

"If I could have gone into the old regiment, Andry, I would have been proud to have you for a servant. It was decent of you to enlist on my account. As it is, you're in and I'm out; you can't get out, and I can't get in. Do your best to be a credit to the regiment. Try for promotion, Andry—try for promotion. Good-by."

Andry saluted him again and stood at gaze as Dick walked off. Then he, too, turned, and each man went his way, striding along as if the earth belonged to him, though neither of them looked like a man who would be very harsh to trespassers. Neither looked back until they were out of each other's sight.

THEN, though, Andry MacDougal climbed a hillock by the roadside and sat down to smoke where a clump of wind-blown alders hid him from casual view. There he wrestled hour after hour with his Covenanter's conscience and a muttered something that he called a "hunner' pound." He was still in the throes of it—still arguing with himself—when Dick Anthony had finished filling his yacht's fresh-water tank at the hose-pipe on the quay, and was listening to a homily from the apple-cheeked ancient in a tam-o'shanter who officiated there in all the different capacities a 'longshore Scotsman can assume. And they are many, and include the moralities.

"Ou-aye—ou-aye—a young man an' his fancy!—Aye, I've seen the like many a time! Ye *will* go, won't ye! Ye want to go, an' ye will go, an' be domned to all advice on that or any other subject! Aye—storm or no storm—an' her that's comin' will be terr-ific, mind ye—ye'll have y'r way! Aweel —go then, an' droon—go an' droon an' be done with ye! I've said all I have to say, but you say y'r prayers—say y'r prayers, Mr. Richard Anthony—for I'm thinkin' hell's a verra hot place, an'——"

"Want to hear me say them?" asked

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Dicky. Ideas that did not run in ruts always won his fancy.

"Aye. I'm thinkin' ye've had no mother to hear ye prattle them this many a year. Say on!"

"Lord God," said Richard, pulling off his hat, as serious as Doctor Gillespie had ever been in kirk on Sunday, "here sails Dick Anthony, with only a thousand pounds between him and a life of shame. Do unto him as he would do to Thee, were he God and Thou Dick Anthony! Amen."

With that he freed his hawser—threw it inboard—and jumped after it. He stood at the little ketch's helm until his headsails drew, and then sat down comfortably, headed down the Firth of Clyde with wind and tide aiding.

Old Tam-o'shanter stood gazing after him, gasping and blinking like a man who has swallowed gasoline instead of whisky.

## II

DICK had spent every second he could wring out of study-time for ten years past in learning and conquering the tides and cross-currents that go boiling through the Kyles of Bute and the savage maze of rock-torn water within forty or fifty miles of Arran.

In fishing-boats—in fragile open-decked affairs intended to be raced—in dinghies—with all the different varieties of rig to aid or to confuse him—he had found his way by day and night, in fog, in driving rain, in sleet or when the wild nor'westers blew—by dint of lead and pluck and reckoning and mother-wit—until in course of time and accident he won to singlehanded seamanship. His uncle had always given him free leave to drown, since it was long ago evident that he rode a horse too well to break his neck that way.

"Fine way to grow into a man!" said his uncle when the question of permission had been raised; and Dick, long since a man in everything but years, had grown into something very few attain—a man who was completely self-contained and self-reliant. He did not know it, and his uncle never even guessed it. He fought the sea indomitably, and had no time to notice how he grew.

But not even Dick had ridden out a storm such as swept the whole of Western Europe for six weeks or more that Summer. There were men who urged the series of rain and gales as disproof absolute of Biblical tradition and the promise there should be no second Deluge.

Before Lamlash had dropped below the skyline to the north and westward of him—while Holy Island was still a dull gray rim above the sea—he noticed that the usually stolid steamers wallowing up the Clyde to Greenock and Clydebank were racing against time, their dirty funnels astream with forced-draft smoke. The few sailing-craft he passed were racing with housed topsails for the nearest port. There was something out of ordinary coming.

His barometer—the hurrying black clouds—the wind—the behavior of other craft and of the birds—all pointed to the one thing, tempest. Soon the wind backed hard, and he had to take three reefs down one by one, coming up into the wind each time and taking a good sweeping stare at the horizon. He was as well fitted as any man living to read the signs, and he noted each one. Better than most men he knew the dangers of those coasts. He considered them.

So those who said afterward that he had been blown to sea along the course he took were altogether wrong. How can a man be blown *against* a hurricane?

A fishing-fleet, close-hauled in a frantic hurry to reach shelter, made signals as it passed. The last boat—there is no Samaritan so kindly as the storm-taught sailor—altered its course more than a point or two to speak to him, and he put his own helm down to meet the men half way.

"Run for it!" they yelled, with a lot of arm-waving, pointing to the dirty clouds and the white-tops lifting off the dull-gray waves. "Put about an' run for it! Follow us!"

But Dick shouted back to "Give my love to Glasgie!" and went on; so they told ashore afterward of "a puir dementit laddie sailin' into it wi' three reefs down." And that is interesting chiefly as disproof of the other story that he was blown away and could not help himself.

His action was deliberate. He steered out for wider sea-room, and passed Pladda out of sight of everything, just as the storm burst with a full-gale overture.

Then, as if to prove himself (for most of the Anthonys had had to prove themselves when they first set out into the world with a commission and a thousand pounds), he

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set his boat's nose close into the teeth of the quarreling wind, and pricked out a long leg on his chart that would take him to the middle of St. Patrick's Channel.

He recalled the legend that another Anthony, picked up by chance and promised anything, had piloted the suffering remnant of Spain's Armada around the coast of Ireland in just such another gale as this; and, true to his creed that small-boat sailors are bolder men and better than the high-poop captains, he set out to do better than his ancestor.

Night hid him scudding, low-gunwaled, in a coal-black sea, toward the Irish coast, his little binnacle-light glowing warmly in the shelter of the cockpit, and his ketch—a ten-ton, spoon-bowed cruiser of a thing that he had dubbed the *Also Ran*—snoring into it, lifting as a duck lifts, easily, over savage seas that thundered down on him past Sanda Island.

Morning found him taking full advantage of a lull in the storm to beat his way to windward past the Mull of Kintyre, sighting land at the end of each alternate "leg" to take cross-bearings. There was plenty of record of him so far, for he was seen and logged with a query after him by more than one hurrying steamer.

But after he passed the Mull his course must be conjectured, for Dick was at no time talkative. He could be induced, sometimes, to talk of what he meant to do, and of what other men had done, but of his own brave doings never. He fought and he won, and there the matter ended; thereafter he was much too busy looking for a bigger tyranny to beat to waste good breath on bragging of the past.

He fought to a finish with the biggest bully he could find—the North Atlantic. He won, and it took him a month to win. It is not easy to imagine how the battle went, with the overhanging cliffs of Ireland on his port bow, and to starboard all the boiling wrath of hurricane-torn ocean. More than one big steel liner sank in that succeeding mess of gales, and many a ship with horse-power reckoned by the thousand turned up three or four weeks overdue.

The captains of the big ships spoke of the storm in shudders. A month in a ten-ton cabined ketch, alone, beggars imagination altogether. He must have come through like the spirit of the wind, too light to swamp, too small to break up underneath a weight of water, and too full of the soul of fight to quit and give the weather best.

He sheltered in Lough Swilly once, and a London paper had a paragraph about him. Once he was reported lying-to under the lee of Tory Island. A report of him reached his uncle many a long week afterward by devious routes from Inishmurray. Three times the papers had him drowned, and once he was reported picked up by a passing ship, but he always turned up a few days afterward, still smiling and still safe in his own weather-hammered ketch.

Tired-eyed and triumphant, he put into more than one place to refit, and once he waited three days while a new sail was made for him, his own fo'sail having gone to feed the mad Atlantic. The fishermen begged him to remain in port until the gales blew by, but he laughed—unmusically as the devil, attractively as a sunny morning—while he thanked them for the warning and refused to wait.

Unshaven, sea-salted, weathered, uncommunicative, he was not a man of whom strangers cared to ask too many questions; and, questioned or not, he put to sea again without any explanation. They would point to barometers, and to the weather signs, and read him off a list of wrecks; he would content himself with paying for what he had come ashore to buy, and then beat out to windward. And he made his goal.

HE REACHED Cork Harbor utterly dog-weary, but as quietly satisfied as some merry-minded men might be who had come into a legacy. His hands were no longer ornaments, and his complexion bore the imprint of the sea; but he had beaten the sea, and he wore the laurels of the victor in the shape of self-acquaintance unashamed. He wondered why people turned to stare at him as he strode the streets of Cork, and was vaguely annoyed by various and frequent efforts at making his acquaintance.

From Cork he wrote letters and sent telegrams. A letter from his lawyer notified him that the courts had confirmed him heir to the Anthony estates, failing the birth of a son to the present beneficiary; then he promptly applied to Whitehall for three years' leave of absence for travel abroad, and obtained it. Not all of the sweeter fruits of service fall to the Regular Army.

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After that he wasted no more time avoiding crowds, but pulled his little anchor out of the mud of the River Lee and took a tow behind a string of barges, out to what should have been blue water. The sun ought to have been shining, to fit in with his mood of venture, for none of Drake's men ever put to sea with more or manlier hope in their hearts or less fear of any consequences. But the sun seemed to have lost heart.

The journey across half a hundred steamer-lanes to the nearest point in France would have called for not much more than caution in ordinary weather, but in the stew of savagery such as that late Summer had to show it proved to be no track for any but a fish, or flotsam, or the wind, or Richard Anthony. The conquerable would have quit and gone back to shelter; the merely foolhardy or the ignorant would have drowned.

In addition to two Channel currents fighting with the wind-flung hate of the Atlantic, there were wallowing ships to reckon with, hurrying homeward with their blind bridge-ends awash at every other roll. The wind, tearing through the plow-steel shrouds, mimicked the steamer whistles that shrieked and passed on. It was the little boats that did the getting out of the way!

He was three days and three nights and another day in making sight of Brest; and he dropped anchor in French water on a lee shore, too tired to do anything but let out every fathom of chain he had, and fling himself below to sleep. He fell at once into the twenty-second stage of sleep and stayed there, tossed like the club of a flail at thrashing-time, and sung to by an anchor-chain that clanked rhythmically through the dirge of wind and sea.

But sleep was his servant, not his mistress. Like the majority of men who have the gift of greatness in them, he could take his rest in concentrated doses when he chose. He was awake again long before midnight, back in the cockpit, watching the winking of the best-lighted coast in all the world, and growing happier each minute as the wind and water tried to winnow him loose, but could not. His was the spirit that draws little pleasure out of half a gale; he must conquer the terrific, even if he must quarter the wide earth to find it, and bring it then to bay.

Now, with the black waves racing past him and the wet wind dirging in his ears he reached the ultimate of human ecstasy. He had to celebrate it. The untamed heathen in his blood wore through the centuries of tutored self-restraint; the same wild blood of mountain-men who had driven back the Romans, of men who had exulted savagely in Killiekrankie Pass, boiled in his veins and crowded for exquisite expression. He dived into the cabin and by dint of stern gymnastics dragged out and unlocked a water-tight steel box. The thing he took from it and brought back to the cockpit it suited him and others of his countrymen to call an instrument of music.

Soon, away and away over the hurrying sea, wilder than the wind that bore it, storm-tortured and confused, there wailed a Highland coronach that split the night—blood-curdling melancholy ripped from the heart of Wo herself to revel in the murk—no doubt a symphony, but not evident as such to the uneducated ear.

He was a failure, was he? "Lochaber No More" announced to the elements the knell of prospects. Fate and the law of England and his uncle had combined, had they, to clutch away his ten-year-grueled-for career? "Duncan Grey" wrung tears about it from the angry majesty of night. He was that most useless, now, of all things, was he, a crammed, damned, done-for, over-age civilian? So said the Government examiners. So said his uncle. So said the world. "Adieu, My Native Banks of Ayr" went skirling through the drones and chaunter until friend Richard's big, soft, rugged heart was near to splitting under multiplied emotion.

None but the Caledonian Muses know what tune he would have called on next; he was in a mood for anything, provided it were only minor-keyed. But out of the illimitable dark there swept a beam of sudden light, full in his eyes. Through the many-sounding blackness presently there drummed the double din of bronze propellers, driven hard. Almost before he realized that he was not alone—while he yet reached for his pitiful tin-bleating foghorn—gongs rang loud in the waist of a foreign battleship, whose bulging funnels glowed red it seemed a hundred yards above him. The splash of a lowered boat was succeeded instantly by the measured thump of oars. Then a boat-hook found his gunwale, and a voice yelled from the darkness—

"Tchomp!"

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DICK blinked into a glare that made his eyes ache, and sought words that might express his incredulity—his wish to understand. Was there war? Were the navies of the world gone mad? Might not a gentleman seek anchorage in foreign waters without——

"Tchomp! Kvick! Fear not, saire! Ve catch you, yes!"

"What for?" asked Dick, illumination not yet dawning on him. His little vessel was plunging heel and toe in a death-dance beside the warship's cutter, and the risk of being crushed together by a wave grew greater each second.

"Vot for? Vot for you summon help? Vot for you blow your vissle—yes?"

"Some mistake," said Dick, leaning on one elbow to avoid the glare, and peering into the face of gallantry in Gallic uniform. "I don't want help."

A shout came from the warship's bridge, and her tremendous whistle started to rip slits in the protesting storm. Even fifteen thousand horse-power dare not dally with a lee shore overlong. He in the cutter's stern waxed angry.

"Not vant help? Then vy you make dangaire signals? Vy you make ze execrable *sacré* god-dam noise, yes—vot for?"

It dawned, then, on Dick Anthony that his music faced indictment. He held up his bagpipes in the beam of light, at the risk of wetting the precious leather bag that held the wind. The spray sploshed heavenward between the plunging boats, and the Frenchman eyed spray and bagpipes with equal disenchantment.

"*Sacré nom de quar-r-rante mille culottes!*" he swore, considering that the name of breeches would be insult to a Scotsman.

"*Cornemuse!*" he shouted through the spray. "*Un imbécile écossais et sa cornemuse!*"

With a curse at Dick Anthony, the weather, and the night, he ordered the cutter about and set the men pulling for the screaming battleship, whose three hundred pounds of superheated steam were singing second to the noisy elements. One had to think in deft inharmonies in order to recognize one's thoughts.

"Run for sheltaire, imbecile!" he shouted back, making a megaphone of his two hands and then waving good-by with a gesture that was art as well as insult. A minute later the cutter was hoisted high in davits and the warship disappeared, hooting like all hell on a holiday.

Now, Dick was no neurotic visionary. He was not an advocate of art for epilepsy's sake, although he did believe himself an expert on his national instrument. He was a level-headed, decent Scots gentleman of more than ordinary parts. His vices—if bagpipes are a vice, for instance—were national. He felt the breath of new things borning, and he needed wilderness and room in which to make acquaintance with the strength he felt was gathering inside him. Whatever the French might think about his "*cornemuse*," he knew the necessity for playing pibrochs.

And, since within their five-mile limit it was nothing more than reasonable to permit the French a preference for other music, he decided to move on, storm or no storm. There was a witchery about the darkling night that summoned all the prowess and adventure from the depths of him.

So, with a bell-buoy clanging the knell of sailormen close by, he humped his neat, sinewy shoulders above the little winch and worked until his muscles cracked, wrenching his anchor off the bottom by almost superhuman effort. Then he started to beat seaward off a dangerous lee shore.

The lights of Brest, that would have welcomed him, blinked cheerily and brought feather-beds to mind—cooked food in lieu of canned — conversation — frivolity, perhaps. The sea grew wrathier each minute —blinder—more bitter—colder—more uninviting. He remembered he had meant to visit Brest.

But, the more the red and white lights called, the clearer called the witchery of being all alone. He knew that to the tune of Highland music in among the bull-backed breakers thoughts were coming to him big enough to burst the heads of unimaginative men. Men do not achieve freedom by yelping with the crowd; they win it alone, and then the crowd yelps after them to do their bidding.

Dick was not thinking of the crowd. Nor was he thinking of Dick Anthony. He was letting thoughts come to him where the bigger thoughts are born, and where none but the bravest and the best dare go to gather them. He was not choosing where the thoughts should lead. He knew—and that was sufficient—that he was winning freedom.

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Strengthened by the savage music he had made and meant to make, his fight that time for open sea was his fiercest yet. Sea, wind, tide, currents, and fatality combined to oppose him. A ton of water, flung like a joke from the caldron where the devil's broth is brewed, flopped ton-heavy in the cockpit, drowning his binnacle-light and rendering his compass valueless. He had to guess, and wear to sea by judgment and dead reckoning.

And the man who understands the art by which dead reckoning is made knows too how the seamew and the albatross can find the way. He is a man who holds his tongue, as a general rule, and does things.

Nursing his sails' strength, Dick bored close-hauled into the blackness, luffing a little and again when the worst of the wrenching squalls took hold of him, until a glimpse behind him over one shoulder told him that the lights of Brest were fifteen miles away; they were growing paler in the first dim efforts of a watery dawn.

Then he hove-to. Then, with the spirit that had brought him out still running high, and growing higher as the promise of foul weather showed the need of it, he reached again for his bagpipes. "Should Auld Acquaintance" skirled aloud and louder, where the gulls had days since ceased to dare.

So it was not a gull that answered him, as the last notes died away. And the sea gives back no echo. They were pipes!

The tune, perhaps, was inappropriate, for what Campbells could be coming over that wet ridge and furrow? He was no beleaguered garrison—no last man left—only the last of the Anthonys, alone and unafraid, hove-to in a waste of water. It occurred to him, though he did not know why, that it was not good to be hove-to. He unlashed his tiller and let the yacht's nose fall away.

THEN, as the gray dawn lifted, he caught the lilt and skirl and swing of pipes again. Then, as he rose on a giant comber and could see 'round a twice-as-wide horizon, a patched gray lugsail showed, bellied tight and bearing down on him at a terrific pace.

In a small French fishing-boat, such as the poorer Bretons use, a giant of a man sat perched with what certainly were pipes across his knees. He sat with his legs in water, and was steering with the evident intent of coming very close indeed to Dick.

He shouted, but it was not possible to hear him. It was only possible to realize one arch-impossibility. Whoever he was, he could not possibly, by any stretch of seamanship or skill or chance, go about into the wind—come to—lose weigh—alter his course—or stop—without swamping instantly. He was running, as the sailors call it, "on" the wind, and behind him raced death in the shape of piled-up, greedy waves.

The man made a signal as he came within a lusty shout's length, but a shout's length was not his nearest. He carried on until he was all but abreast, some thirty feet away. Then, as the yacht rose high on a mountain of a thing with a bitter fanged fringe wind-whipped along its summit, and the little boat sank deep into a swirling valley—as the spray swept up in a singing curtain between them, half blinding Dick, he caught sound of a yell—he saw what seemed to be the last of a drowning man—and the small boat went on uncontrolled, to swamp a minute later, cockle up, and sink.

It has been hinted, once or twice perhaps, that Richard Anthony was neither more nor less than gentleman. Death offered now—wet death—unwitnessed. As a man does see such things and comprehend their meaning in a flash, he saw the total of the pride of mastery he had won by all that fighting—he saw his hard-won leave to live and believe in Richard Anthony—he saw the dismal end of it. He could see his uncle exulting, and could read the obits in the papers. He tasted, felt, saw, weighed the temptation to let this unknown idiot drown—felt the full strength of it—realized the utter certainty of being whelmed—swamped—ended—cut off in his prime of newly born ambition—laughed in the eyes of it—and went about!

He put his ketch's bulk between the swimmer and the wind. He took the full force of the rage and weight of hell on his trembling broadside. He flung a life-line while he held on in the cockpit, his leg jammed up against the side until the coaming cut into his thigh like an ax. He felt and heard the thunder of the waves on his ketch's underside, as she keeled, and keeled, and shook. He saw the water up above him—saw a burst wave fill his mainsail—saw the fo'sail fill—saw both sails go down, down, all but under, as the deck hove skyward—felt a tug—hauled hard on the life-

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line—humped his shoulders as he never yet had strained them, even at the winch—and hauled into the brimming cockpit a spluttering, wet human who thrust dripping bagpipes underneath the seat and leaped like an orang-outang to the weather shrouds.

In a second it was evident that there were two men laboring to save the ship, not one. The newcomer sprang on the sails and slashed them with a dirk, letting the water pour away to freedom. Before another wave could fill them up, Dick Anthony had headed her a little to the wind. In five minutes the ketch was floating upright, with a foot of water flopping on the cabin floor, but whole—into the wind—and safe.

"If ye'll heave her to," said the dripping giant, staggering aft, "I'll bend ye new sails on."

Dick said nothing, but hove-to as desired and let out a sea-anchor. Then he watched the gaunt jetsam of a man perform gymnastics that would have taxed the strength of most athletes on dry land.

"I found ye by wireless," he said with a note of pride, as he dropped into the cockpit later and accepted bread and cheese. "I was waitin' yonder at the signal-station, givin' up hope of ye, though I thought ye must pass this way. Then there cam' news of a man they said was mad, playin' tunes an' orderin' battleships to go to hell, an' I knew I'd found ye. Aye, it was easy then! But, man, I'm tellin' ye, I've fairly bur-r-rned money—bur-r-rned it! I've not a ha'-penny left of all that hunner' pound—buyin' yon boat that's sunken took ma last penny piece."

"Did you desert?" asked Dick; and those were the first words he had spoken.

"Eh?"

"Did you desert?"

"I did not. I bought ma dischar-r-rge. It was varra costly, but I broke into the hunner' pound an' bought it."

"Oh."

"So, I'm at y'r ser-r-vice," with an air of triumph.

"Very well, Andry. Man the pump."

So, two men went on from Brest, where one had started out alone, and through all that followed there was never any more compact than that between them—three words of agreement, and an order—"Man the pump." They were enough.

## III

CAIRENE society is cosmopolitan, but Princess Olga Karageorgovich was out of place. In spite of her Servian name, her money and her influence were Russian, and her dresses were "conceived" in Paris.

If she was more than two and twenty, then the extra years were as artfully concealed as were her motives. And if appearance went for anything, she should have been adorning Mayfair, or the Bois, or any of the promenades of Europe where cream and roses vie with one another. She had all junior officialdom enthralled—enraptured—hypnotized by the art that glowed behind her eyes—attendant on her. And they were paid of course for wet-nursing dry *fellâheen*. The seniors (and their wives) all voted her a nuisance.

She spoke French chiefly, and there is not much sense in talking politics in any other tongue in Egypt, for English politics—at all events along the Nile—are stodgy and utilitarian to the stuffiest degree.

All the finer, in-between-the-lines work is hinted at in French, and it was the high-falutin stuff that appealed to her; she posed as a student of institutions. And after Dick let go his anchor in the harbor of Alexandria and came on to Cairo by express, she grew interested in purely British things, asking a brand-new line of questions. Officialdom had hopes, for a while, that she even meant to visit Scotland.

The sunshine of Dick's character had strengthened, now that he had a companion of kinds. He might have grown tired of his Odyssey, but for having to lead Andry. Keeping the man's courage up in the Bay of Biscay, without letting Andry know that he was doing it, was Dick's first serious lesson in the art of leading, and it held his interest.

The Bay of Biscay had treated them according to tradition. Twenty-mile-long rollers, hove high on one another by the mid-Atlantic and sent hurrying along the leagues to thunder at the rock-bound feet of Portugal, pitched them up into the spray until their keel showed clear above a lifting ridge—caught them in seething spume, to be sucked down valley-deep into a maelstrom—only to fling them up again and heave them, flat-beaten by the wind, against another white-topped wall of

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sea. They had no second of unwatchfulness.

Turn about, they had to nurse the little ship day and night, night and day, ceaselessly. Again and again Andry, laboring at the pump, begged him to seek aid from some high-sided merchantman, thrashing past into the gale. But Dick laughed and refused. They blew on southward like the spirit of the storm, logged as wreckage by the big ships—a wraith of something darker than the weather, glimpsed for an instant and then gone.

When Andry was despondent, out would come Dick's bagpipes, and a swaggering refrain would answer back the storm, putting new fight in both of them. No man can listen to the pipes for long and be afraid, unless the pipes are preaching *at* him. The skirl of them draws out a strong man's courage, as a snake comes from its hole, backbone crawly-wise, and the might-have-been-a-quitter lifts his chin. (But it takes a man to play them when the bullets whistle, or, as in this case, when the wild sea is the enemy.)

They scooted through the raging straits of Gib. as the dolphins go, swift, straight, and foaming, all eyes awake for the steamers coming through along twenty or more diverging lanes and chasing their own smoke. But after that, there followed blue, sweet-sailing months in which they dawdled leisurely along the coast of Africa, oblivious of time and unannoyed by the flag of England.

Even the old mercantile Red Ensign, hanging tousled from the stern of some filthy tramp, would give Dick qualms and set him to considering unbeaten trails. For all his sunniness, he was hard-bitten. Failure—rejection—had hurt his inmost soul, and he needed those lazy, sunny months to give him back a little of proportion. When he started he could have almost taken sides with England's enemies; by the time that he reached Egypt he could keep his shame hidden, but he was as far, still, from forgetting as the Jews were in ancient Babylon. He had some hazy notion that the Sphinx might prove good company, and that there would be solace in the desert silences.

Andry—ready to fight anybody at the drop of anybody's hat for Dick's sake—nearly wept when the little *Also Ran* was sold for fifty pounds to a 'longshore Greek. She was worth that for her keel and rivets. The yacht was wheezy by this time—strained all to pieces—leaking in every seam—and another deep-sea journey in her would have been unthinkable. But from that minute Andry hated Greeks and Egypt. He would have bought her himself, if he had had the money, and he declared war there and then on all the systems of the East, social, business, and religious.

He shepherded the luggage up to Cairo with perspiring care, and not one single dragoman eked out a tip. And he punched one dragoman so fiercely that Dick had to pay two pounds (Egyptian) to settle matters.

For a few days Cairo swallowed Dick. Officialdom, for his father's sake, put him up for the swellest clubs and entertained him. Sharp-eared, wide-eyed officialdom in sweat-wet suits extracted facts from him and sympathized in a manner of its own. It was on a club veranda, with a long "John Collins" on the table at her side, that Princess Karageorgovich heard Richard say things which convinced her—which made her send a cablegram or two in code.

She was not supposed to hear. She was supposed to be listening to the admiring chatter of a little group of worshipers. Dick—never a lady's man, even when the lady had soft eyes and was twenty-two—would have winced at the thought of sharing secrets with her. The hot, tired-eyed Proconsul in starched white drill drew Dick aside to where both thought themselves out of earshot. He was in quest of new, strong nerves—of unmosquito-bitten energy—of youth, and young idealism, and clean pride—to feed the Government machinery at thirty-three per cent. of market price.

"You must be reasonable, my boy." It was clear that Dick had told him many things. "You must take what you can get. Because you failed for the Indian Civil and couldn't make the Regular Army for some reason or other is no reason why you shouldn't be a huge success with us. We *want* good men. We're looking for them. Go home and get nominated—I'll give you a letter that will turn the trick."

"I wouldn't go home if they'd give me Egypt," answered Dick. But the elder man persisted.

"Take my advice, now, and pack off home. There's a splendid field waiting for you here."

"No," said Dick quietly, leaning back against the pillar and looking the Proconsul straight between the eyes. "It's very good of you to suggest it, and—er—thanks awfully——"

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"Why not?"

"You wouldn't like it if I told you."

"Not at all. Go ahead. Always glad to listen to another point of view. Speak up!"

"Well—I'm sick and tired and disgusted with the British Government. I despise the whole damned kettle of fish, and I won't demean myself to the extent of taking service. I despise any Government that'd turn a good man down just because some other man knows a little more Sanskrit poetry, or some such twaddle. It was Sanskrit, if you please, that pilled me! For that, I'm a rebel—yes—a rebel! I feel like becoming an American. I'd as soon be a Jew as an Englishman!"

"I've no doubt America could put you to work," laughed the official. "Have you any definite plans?"

"No. Except that I'm going to leave Egypt. Can't afford to stop here for one thing—too expensive."

"This isn't like the Home Government," smiled the Proconsul, stroking a gray mustache. "You'd like it here—think it over."

"Done thinking!" answered Dick with one of his sun-lit smiles, that broke as a rule so suddenly and melted opposition. "I think it's high time British ideas of things were routed out and cleaned. What interests me most is wondering who's big enough to do it. No, I won't take a Government job on any terms, but thanks awfully—and please don't construe anything I've said as personal. If the rest were like you I wouldn't hesitate."

"It seems to me that your ideas are the ones that want cleaning, young man!" The senior was showing traces of annoyance.

"No," said Dick, cocksurely, "I've cleaned mine. Good afternoon, sir."

He raised his hat and stalked away, walking like a king and not at all aware of it; he seemed to himself more like a little, unimportant man who had said a lot too much. He felt hot all over—hot with shame—and his storm-taught sense of freedom chafed again at the thought of lingering where officialdom lay in wait for him with a cunning noose of words. He reached his hotel and a new decision simultaneously.

HE FOUND Andry on his bedroom floor, crouched over the beryl-hilted sword, cleaning it, and he watched him for a while, half amused, half wondering. That sword always did make him wonder, just as it always filled Andry with loyal ecstasy. To Andry it stood for all that mattered in the way of ethics—birthright, loyalty, clan-leadership, obedience, possession—he would have sooner left his meals and money than that relic of a more-than-feudal past. To Dick it was scarcely any more than a reminder of his home, and he wondered oftener than not why he had seen fit to insist on taking it. He certainly would not have owned to a superstitious regard for it, whereas Andry would not trust it even under lock and key, but carried it with him wherever he went.

"Pack up!" said Dick, after watching a little while. "We take the evening train for Alexandria."

Nothing loath, Andry obeyed, folding things with an Army-taught exactness and locking them with Scots suspicion of the world. It was all one to him where the service led him; he was fixed for life, and knew it, and perfectly content to travel anywhere.

BUT, if Dick imagined that he was drawing back from a trap and that a quick retreat from Cairo would see him free of the world again, he mistook the signs, or else he failed to see them.

"Who was the young man with the royal stride?" asked Princess Olga Karageorgovich, not more than two minutes after Dick had left the club. And, glad of a chance to answer what seemed for once a genuinely harmless question, the Proconsul wiped inside his collar with a dripping handkerchief and told the truth.

"Traveling for his own amusement, or so he says, and none too pleased with what he sees. Feels the weather, I expect—name's Anthony—Richard Anthony of Arran—dunno, I'm sure, what his plans are."

He did not know that from behind a pillar the Princess had heard every word of Dick's conversation, and he would not have cared two pins in any case. He was merely glad when the Princess nodded him good afternoon and drove away. Everybody knew that she was there for something; but what Russian intrigue expected to achieve in Egypt was beyond imagining, and the presence of an unnecessary addition to his legitimate problems bored him.

But Andry—who was so suspicious of all strangers as a rule—was frankly and

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delightedly bewitched. She met him in the hotel corridor—by accident, of course—and wisely resisted the temptation to give him a gold coin. He would have taken it, would have put it in the pocket of his "trews," and would thenceforward have been on his closest guard. But she divined that much, and refrained.

"Off back to bonnie Scotland?" she asked him, with a smile that won his heart. Her eyes had melted it already, but the smile seemed like the spirit of all the kisses that had ever been, and Andry fell to pieces morally.

"No-no, leddy—na-na! We're gaun' tae Alexandria, on the train the nicht."

She smiled again, and left him feeling as if the Sphinx had grown young again and had laid siege to him. And that evening, as he stood on the station platform outside Dick's reserved compartment, he pointed out the Princess and her little retinue fussing on to the train.

"She's a varra fine wumman, sir—verra fine!" he assured Dick, with an air of confidence. "Name, sir? Her name's the Princess Krakatchoustiwich. She's French. From France."

## IV

SUSPICIOUS—canny—dour—immense—and something slow of movement, Andry was nevertheless a "de'il wi' the lasses." If they wanted to admire the height and the heft of him, the brightness of his eyes and the sheen of his red hair, they had his leave and he gave them opportunity. He had seldom enjoyed anything so much as standing about in the great hot foyer of the Hotel Tewfik Pasha, as he always did when Dick chose to wander off alone.

No woman went in or out without the benefit of his notice, and there was one whom he particularly favored; she had round, brown eyes, and a dainty ankle, and she spoke so little English that he had to repeat things over and over again. Thus she learned what he said by heart, without his realizing it.

"If it is the business of a maid to let herself be kissed by a *cannibale écossais* and c-r-r-r-r-ushed *comme ça*," she panted, still trying to speak English, she was so unhinged with indignation, "then it is also business to say the price is a hundred francs, *n'est-ce pas?*"

"Speak French, imbecile," purred Princess Olga Karageorgovich, "and do not speak so loud."

So the maid continued in her own swift-flowing tongue:

"He says—ugh! *le monstre!*—says—that he carries the sword in that bag, and that he sleeps with it because his master would rather die than lose it. He says he never, no, never, leaves it—not at any time. He showed it to me—ugh!—so big—and sharp—with two edges—and with a great beryl in the handle, old and badly cut—it is antique. He says—there is a king, once on a time, in his disgusting Scotland—name of Alexander. This Alexander *cochon* conquers in a battle—name of Larg—in Arran, wherever *that* is—year 1266—another *cochon* king of Norway—name of Haakon. He says—his master's ancestor—name of Anthony—performs terrific acts of valor, and the *cochon* Alexander gives to him this two-edged-sword affair, wishing to confer on him distinction. After that, he produces the sword of two edges—and—when I nearly faint at the blood-curdling spectacle—he kisses me—*là!* He c-r-r-r-r-ushes me, *comme ça!* In the name of Justice I demand a hundred francs!"

"Continue," smiled the Princess, not noticing the modest request.

"There was no more, except that they leave here at daybreak—he did not name the steamer. Their berths have been engaged."

"Send Henri to me," purred the Princess, and the maid decamped grumbling.

Henri proved to be a Levantine of sallow skin—dressed in an Egyptian fez and European clothes. He bowed, and waited in silence for his orders.

"Tell Filmi Fared I have news for him."

Henri bowed himself out again in silence, and the Princess walked to the window, whence she could see Dick Anthony striding along the sea-front as if the whole earth knew he owned it. She watched him as a snake might watch a bird until he crossed the street and disappeared in the hotel.

"I must see him on a horse," she told herself. "I ought to see him on a horse. But there isn't time! If he looked as well on horseback as he does on foot, I would know—that he is 'it'—and that 'it' has happened!"

Her reflections were broken into—or

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perhaps continued—by the opening of the door. Filmi Fared was bowed in first by the mixed-blood Henri; then he bowed himself in, with both hands folded in front of him and his brown eyes fixed on the floor. It was only when a sound suggested that the Princess might have moved her head that his eyes looked up. And at that she tricked him. She had looked away and back again.

She caught his eyes and laughed—stepped up to him and took his arm—led him to a couch—and stood there facing him, after compelling him to sit. He sat quite still, except that one hand stroked his gray-shot beard. Then a long, lean forefinger scratched at the side of his aquiline nose. Then he bit his knuckle. Then his eyes met hers again for an instant, and he looked guilty instead of being glad that he was privileged to gaze on Satanita at her youthful loveliest.

"News?" he asked. "Your messenger said news." He spoke French perfectly.

"Yes. News! I have the man for you." Her young eyes, that hinted so much deviltry, flashed as his old ones could never do. "I have the leader. Listen, Filmi Fared—listen! There is little time. A king, named Alexander, once gave this man a sword. Is not that delicious? Where are we—in Alexandria, *n'est-ce pas?* Who named it so? Alexander the Great—Iskander, as they call him—eh? Iskander, then, since our plot is laid in Arabic, gave a sword with a beryl in the hilt to this man's ancestor. Is that clear? Have you no imagination?"

FILMI FARED—both hands folded in his lap—looked down at his ill fitting European clothes and then straight over at the wall in front of him. His eyes were puckered, like those of a man who peers through the mist to something dim beyond.

"These are great lands—and times—for breeding legends," he remarked.

The Princess laughed. "Have you one ready-made, or must we invent one?"

"I was searching my memory."

"Bah! Let us invent! What is the legend of this Alexander? The legend, not the truth. He is almost a god, is he not? Tall—golden-headed — dignified — served by a giant—fearless—would that description fit him?"

"In popular imagination—yes."

"Well—my man is all those things—and more! My man is English, and a rebel—for I heard him say it! Now for the legend, though! It must be a prophecy—those always take the popular fancy best. Let us say—Iskander was to come again—in Alexandria, the city that he built and named after himself—he was to come holding a two-edged sword with a beryl in the hilt, given to him by some god—go on, think, man!—by which god?"

"By Osiris," hazarded the Egyptian.

"Nonsense! This is a Pan-Islam movement—we must drag in Allah!"

Filmi Fared winced perceptibly. No Moslem likes to hear a Christian speak of Allah, disrespectfully or otherwise.

"Allah — no, Mohammed — gave the sword to Iskander, and—never mind dates, they'll swallow it!—and prophesied that he would be born again, and would reappear with a giant attendant and the sword in his hand, to conquer the whole world and plant the banner of Islam in all the capitals. How's that?"

"It sounds like legend—like genuine legend."

"Then start the legend on its rounds!" exclaimed the Princess, with the air of a teacher who has worked out a small boy's problem for him.

"We need more money," answered the Egyptian.

"Bah! You will get no more, my friend! Russia is generous—Russia is patient—but Russia asks results. Russia has paid liberally. Now, says Russia, where, my friend, where is your rebellion? Why are not England's hands full? How comes it that the British regiments are disengaged, and ready to be hurled into Persia? Eh?"

"But——"

"It is time to act! This man, who can lead if he is made to, has booked his passage for tomorrow at daybreak."

"But——"

"Filmi Fared—who is the arch-conspirator? Who stands more committed and involved than any other man? Whose life would be forfeit, did the English but suspect his treachery? Eh—Filmi Fared? And—and—who—by a word or two—by a hint dropped here and there—could send him—Filmi Fared—to the six-foot drop and the hempen rope, to dance by the neck on nothing—eh? She who could pour all that good Russian money through her fingers—



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and could pour more—could—ah—hadn't you better begin your rebellion—Filmi—Fared? The hour and the man are ready—Russia has paid, and waits!"

He fidgeted nervously, avoiding her bright eyes with something like a system. He did not answer. He knitted his brows in thought, pretending to review the circumstances before he passed judgment. He was old and she was young: but she was triumphant and he too paralyzed by fear to think of new excuses. She had him cornered, for she held the purse-strings; and those who deal with Russia know that there is a hand which holds the long spoon out of which they sup.

"You hesitate," she purred, "but I assure you that the time has come to *act—act—act!*" She was very close to him. A real man would have—— But Filmi Fared was not a man. "Your man of fire is ready for you—a gentleman—brave—poor—a rebel, hating English institutions—a man who can make others love him—a purblind ass, when it comes to his personal advantage—a man with a sword, who fits into a legend, sword and all, as a key fits in a lock—a man with a stride that fills the eye—who walks like a king—*act*, Filmi Fared, for the time has come!"

"Where is your man?" demanded the Egyptian.

"Here. In this hotel."

"Does he know?"

"He knows nothing. He is opportunity. He must be seized, and used! You must make him prisoner—must hold him while the legend starts on its rounds—must show him to the others—must compromise him, so that he *dare* not go back on you—must force his hand—and then *strike*, while the regiments are fat and the officers play polo and make love! And—do you hear me, Filmi Fared?—you must begin to-night!"

"How can he be seized—how compromised? A woman?"

"No. There is no time for that—and—I think it would be no use—at least—not yet. Later, perhaps—well—we will see what we will see. I have a good plan for tonight. His servant talks only English—therefore this Anthony is obliged to attend to most things himself. Anthony is going, I know, tonight to make sure that their luggage is safe on board the steamer. That means that his man will go off for a stroll on his own account."

THAT evening, when Dick had finished dinner, and had started for the steamer where his luggage was supposed to be all stowed by this time—one makes sure of these things, though, in the near and distant East—Andry set off to swagger through the streets, and let the ladies look him over. The new serge suit that Dick had bought for him was the keynote of the move. In lieu of a cane, he carried the precious sword in its canvas cover under his arm, and it served as well.

At a place where six streets came together—where by day Greeks, Turks, Italians and Jews, mixed Levantines and pure Armenians, English, French, German, Arab, Copt, and a dozen other breeds fought with each other to out-trade Egyptians—where at night were principally shadows that hid the unguessable—Andry was hustled suddenly.

Before he could swing around and smite for the honor of the clan of Anthony, some one slippery had snatched the sword from underneath his arm. And before he could raise an outcry, or summon his wits, sword, thief, and those who hustled him were gone—vanished—swallowed by the smelly silences.

## V

FIVE minutes after Andry's breathless arrival back at the hotel found Dick there, too, listening in tight-kept silence—imagining his uncle with a son and heir—recalling his promise—and considering his own predicament.

For one whole minute he cursed himself for having brought the sword away—for another he cursed Andry; then he laughed though, for six feet five in tears can not be taken seriously for more than sixty seconds at a time. Being British, his next move was to spring into a cab and hurry to police headquarters.

The police knew nothing, and cared less. They found it difficult to show even a semblance of interest—until Dick let loose on them a brand of wrath that was new in their experience. Then they consented to arrest the thief—if possible. Dick, considering advertisements and half a hundred other wild expedients, drove sadly back to the hotel to think.

It was the Princess Olga Karageorgovich—pink-slippered—her diamonds a-glitter

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and her living eyes a-glow in the shaded corner of the hotel foyer—ignoring the conventions for the nonce and calling softly to him from between the potted palms—who first showed active sympathy. She hinted at the swarm of grave-robbers—well-diggers—dredgers, and the like who infest the city and are the human tentacles of the illicit back-door trade in curios.

"I buy many curios," she told him. "I know many of these men—and they know me. They trust me. They have a central market, quite unknown to the authorities, of course, where they dispose of their treasures by auction to one another, or to the agents of known buyers. I am a known buyer. My agent knows the ropes. Let me send for him, and tell him to investigate."

"I'd be awfully glad if you would," said Dick, wondering how a woman could seem so young and speak so reliantly, and know so much.

So the Levantine named Henri was sent for, and dispatched in search. Very little more than an hour later he returned, and found Dick pacing up and down on the walk outside the hotel; and he knew—though Dick did not know—that both of them were watched through the shutters of a first-floor window. He led Dick close up underneath the window before he spoke.

"A syndicate of thieves has bought the sword, sir, from the man who stole it. They say they will only deal direct. Will you come at once? If you keep at a little distance, so that no one will suspect, I will show the way."

"Andry!" called Dick, and the giant stepped out of a shadow, nearly frightening Henri out of his sallow skin; dumb with terror he glanced upward at the window. The shutters moved a trifle—forward and then backward—twice, silently, and Henri lost his fear. He made no objection, then, to Andry's following Dick.

They avoided the electric tram-lines, and they took no cab, although they were followed for a little way by half a dozen cabmen offering to drive them. The cabmen made their way back to the hotel, swearing audibly when they discovered that they had missed a fare by following Dick; a woman, unaccompanied, left the hotel before they got back, and they were too late to secure her custom. She took another cab, from a distant corner.

Following their guide carefully, but keeping on the side of the street opposite to him, Dick and Andry threaded mazy side-streets until they came at last to the dingiest, shabbiest part of Alexandria, off the Rue Ras et-Tin, between the Grand Square and the Western Harbor. On either hand, now, were Arab shops and dinginess—the East decaying, before yielding to the business West. It was easy to imagine knives in corners—the moving shadows were alive and loathsome—and the smells were purely Levantine. Andry and Dick drew closer, Dick leading, but Andry so close behind that no man could have slipped between.

The guide crossed over at last—grinned in the sickly light of a small barred window—knocked a drum-signal on the panel of a door, ten feet down a narrow passage—put his foot inside the door directly it was opened—and beckoned Dick.

"Let me go first!" swore Andry, thrusting himself past, heaving the Levantine to one side, and rushing in. All he found was a pitch-dark passage and an old hag, nearly blind, who held a candle-lamp. She peered up at him, trembling and muttering.

"It's all right, Mr. Dick!" he called. And then he started, to find Dick beside him. He winced as Dick grabbed his arm. Iron though they were—iron lumps lashed into place with whipcord—his muscles gave beneath the pressure of Dick's fingers, and beside him he recognized the jaw—the voice—the attitude—of "him who is obeyed."

"You impudent ass! The only man who dare take my wind is a better man! Get to your place behind!"

He flung Andry by the taut-wrenched muscles back and out through the door to the street, then strode straight on alone down the unlit passage.

"I'd forgotten he'd lead or die!" muttered Andry, hurrying after him. "I'd forgotten, I'd forgotten!"

Dick took no notice of him when the giant brought up behind him, breathing hard, at another door. He seemed to have forgotten the incident completely.

The Levantine made more signals, and that door opened, too. The hag dropped out of the procession, and they went on in utter darkness—left, right, right, left—the guide calling out directions from behind and striking occasional matches to assure himself. Finally Dick paused at a narrow doorway on his right, that gaped blacker than the rest had done.

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"That's right, sir," the guide called; "straight in there!"

Dick went ahead, and Andry followed close behind him. Suddenly the door closed on them—sliding in grooves, not swung—and they heard some kind of bolt go home with a well oiled click. They were shut in, tight, in blackness of which they could sense the narrow limits. There was neither light nor ventilation.

"Try the door we came through!" ordered Dick, and he listened to the creak as Andry hove his weight against it; but nothing gave. Then both men heard something, and stood listening in silence. There were voices—the low, steady hum of a hundred voices—in a room beyond.

"Stand still!" commanded Dick, and Andry recalled what the regiment had taught him. Pompey's Pillar—ninety-nine feet up into the night over by the Catacombs beyond—was not more still. Dick felt his way along a baked brick-wall.

He found another door. He could feel the jamb of it, but there was no crack anywhere that light could shine through, and it was shut so fast that the voices sounded through it like the distant murmur of the wind. He felt up and down for a latch, or lock, or keyhole, and found none. So he strode across the little room from wall to wall, to measure it. There were ten clear feet of floor-space.

"The two of us could bu'st yon door we entered by!" said Andry.

"'Engage the enemy more closely!'" quoted Dick, recalling the signal that had flown once at a masthead in Aboukir Bay, close by. "Lie down, Andry—on your back—feet against that wall—head toward this other door—that's it."

Andry obeyed, unquestioning, but shuddering at the "beasties," as the Scots call beetles. Then Dick laid his own strength down in line with Andry's, with his feet on Andry's shoulders.

"Understand me—when I give the word, I want you to shove like hell!"

"Ready, sir!" said Andry, gathering Dick's legs in his mighty arms and filling his lungs.

"Shove ahead!"

DICK felt the heft of Andry's shoulders through his boots—heard the huge leg-muscles crack, as the six-feet-five grew straight. His own hands—neck—shoulders—flattened and grew numb against the door—his own leg-muscles nearly burst—and something began to give. Both men gasped, and strained again—the still, hot blackness shook and filled with yellow streaks—they grunted—there was a din beyond of scattering chairs and suddenly rutched feet—and the door went down in a blaze of light with a crash and the snapping of split woodwork.

In an instant they were on their feet—purple-faced with effort—hair disheveled—tremendous in the door-frame. For an instant more they stared about them, blinking in the glare of light and trying to get focus. Then Andry leaped forward.

"I see the sword!" he yelled.

But Dick's outstretched arm prevented him, and he found himself jerked back again. Dick, too, had seen what Andry had. His eyes were fixed on a table-end, at which sat Filmi Fared. The crowd of at least a hundred men had opened down the middle, and there was a clear gangway down the center of the room. The sword—out of its canvas case—lay in front of Filmi Fared, and he blinked from it to Dick, and from Dick to the sword again.

"Give me that sword!" commanded Dick.

Filmi Fared sat still, dazed by the force and unexpectedness of Dick's arrival, plucking at a dozen plans and a dozen things to say—hesitating—shifting first one foot, then the other.

"Give me that sword!" demanded Dick, this time in Arabic. Framed as they were in the blackness of the burst-in door, he and Andry looked too angry—too immense—too positive to be tackled by a many-minded crowd that lacked a leader. No one moved. Then Dick strode forward suddenly, Andry closing up behind him, covering his master's back with his own huge bulk. In a second Dick had the sword and was examining it, to make sure that the beryl was still safely in the hilt. It was there! In his glee he swung it, and brought it to a whistling, humming shiver in the air above him.

"Hi-e-e-e-ee!" yelled Andry. And for perhaps the first time in his whole career Filmi Fared seized an opportunity before arguing the pros and cons. He made a signal that was understood.

"Zindabad Anthony Shah!" yelled somebody. And that was Persian. Dick understood it—knew what it meant. In twenty

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tongues the crowd yelled out the answer, "Long live King Anthony!"

He looked a king, as he stood there with the jeweled claymore in the air above him and the electric light streaming on him in the center of the room. The crowd swarmed nearer. Some one raised the fallen door, and twenty men took stand to guard it. Then Filmi Fared spoke.

"One would have to believe that was your sword," he smiled. "I would not have thought such skill in wielding it possible."

Unthinking—but possibly with a vague idea that he was proving ownership—Dick swung the sword aloft again. The crowd yelled a salvo of applause, and a flashlight cannoned out. There was no camera visible—only a suspicious-looking box-affair in one far corner of the room.

"Thank you," said Filmi Fared, smiling. And Dick, still dazzled by the flashlight, lowered the sword again, feeling foolish.

"These gentlemen," said Filmi Fared, standing up, "are the sworn representatives of sixty-eight thousand armed men who are at present in secret rebellion against British rule. The movement is world-wide—it is named Pan-Islam—but our present plans are confined to Egypt. We have waited only for a leader. You have been chosen as that leader. You are required to take an oath of allegiance to our cause—on the Koran—on the Bible—and on your sword. You are required to swear that when you have been raised to the throne of Egypt you will rule constitutionally. And you are required to commit yourself in writing before these witnesses. You should sign here."

Dick threw back his tawny head and laughed aloud. Andry, breathing hard, crowded him closer, and tried to peer over Dick's shoulder at the document Filmi Fared had laid out before him on the table.

"You sign, or you die," smiled Filmi Fared. "You may choose which you prefer."

"When does the fight begin?" asked Dick, taking one step backward, and trying his sword-arm unostentatiously. Andry laid both hands on a chair. Filmi Fared chose, or else happened, to misunderstand.

"As soon as you see fit to lead us," he intimated calmly. "When you are leader, and in possession of the facts, it will be your business and not ours or mine to issue orders."

It might have been tempting enough to a man who did not know the strength of England's hold on Egypt—or to a man who knew it and was in a mood to take terrific chances with his honor. Dick was ready to take any other chance but that one. His smile made that much clear. Filmi Fared was about to speak again, but he was interrupted by a signal on another door, at the end of the room opposite to that through which Dick and Andry had burst in.

The signal was answered, and another one replied again. Then the door was opened, and closed again behind a woman, veiled to her heels in black. Her slippers happened to be pink and Dick wondered where—and when—he had seen just such slippers. He was no lady's man—by no means given to noticing the details of a woman's dress.

With a walk that was inimitable—and vaguely familiar—she walked down a gangway opened through the crowd, straight up to Dick. She tapped him with a fan. And, though she was veiled like the wife of some strict Mohammedan, Dick knew that no such acting—no such cocksure carriage—no such nerve came out of any harem.

Andry stepped back a pace, and began to study her inch by inch from the heels upward. He was always suspicious in the first instance, and more of a lady's man than Dick.

"You are the uncrowned King of Egypt!" she asserted—in French—aloud—for all the room to hear. Then she said it again in Italian, and in English, and in Arabic. She seemed to want it understood!

"Decidedly uncrowned!" smiled Richard not knowing what to say. He hated arguments with women.

"You are a prisoner at present. You must remain a prisoner for a day or two——"

Dick's ears were alert to a deep-sea whispering behind him—a little sub-tone—too low for anybody else to hear. Andry was passing information.

"You must remain a prisoner until a story—a legend we have started—reaches its required destination. It went out tonight—like the ripples of a pond, when a stone is thrown into it. It will travel fast. In the meanwhile, you had better sign. You are offered more than you perhaps realize."

Dick smiled, but did not answer. He was bending the sword blade with his left

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hand, a little nervously. Young Scots gentlemen are not offered kingdoms every day. She turned to the crowd, and swept it with a majestic look.

"Leave me alone to speak with him!" she ordered.

The crowd drew back to the farthest wall. But that did not satisfy her; she waved them away. One half went out through the door that she had used; the other half poured through Dick and Andry's gap, and the two Scots could hear them shuffling their feet beyond. Dick heard them open the outer door to let air into the stifling space.

"You have your choice between a kingdom or death!" said the woman, standing close, and tapping Richard with her fan. She spoke in English now.

"Thanks awfully!" laughed Dick.

"Do you appreciate the possibilities?"

"Quite."

"You are said to be Iskander, come to life again, and with Iskander's sword. That is the story that has gone out tonight in ever-widening rings. In a week all Egypt will believe it. In a month—less, in two weeks—you will have all Egypt at your feet—you will be dealing with the Great Powers—acknowledged King of Egypt! Can you not see that these fools—these weaklings, none of whom *dare* lead—will then be *your* fools—*your* tools—you will be King, and they your instruments? Is Richard Anthony afraid? You were not afraid to speak your mind to a High Commissioner! Lead, man! Lead on! You are known for a rebel! Lead these other rebels!"

"I'm quite sober," said Dick, "and I'm not a drug-fiend. You've chosen the wrong man."

SHE changed her line of argument, but lost nothing of her emphasis. Dick sensed the hypnotic suggestion of two eyes that glowed through the eyeholes in her mask; and no woman lived who could get through his guard, once he was given warning. Besides, Andry had whispered certain information. She did not know either of these things.

"You're a proud man, aren't you?" she purred. "You are thinking of your honor —*n'est-ce pas?* Well—it is gone, my friend, and you must win it back again! Yes—gone! You have been flashlight-photographed, with your sword aloft, in the center of these rebels! Whether you consent to lead or no, that photograph hangs over you! That photograph alone would hang you—high as Haman—*unless you lead, and win, win, win!*"

Dick shuddered as the truth of her suggestion filtered home. It seemed that he was in a trap from which there was no way out.

"I wouldn't lead such an outfit as yours," he answered her, "if the King of England offered me the job!"

"Imbecile! Do you suppose that these men will risk letting you out of here alive unless you sign that paper there? In the face of certain death, do you refuse?"

"I refuse," smiled Dick; and Andry sighed like a grampus blowing.

"I beg you not to!"

"Who are you that ask?"

"Ah! My identity must always be a secret——"

"So?" said Dick—and he shot one arm out—a long, left arm that gathered her, and drew her to him, screaming. Then the beryl-hilted sword performed a task for which it had never been intended. It split the long, black shroud that draped her to the heels. He pushed her away again, retaining her mask in his left hand, and she stood gasping in pink and cream and lace and diamonds—the Princess Olga Karageorgovich—indignant—flushed—more lissome and more beautiful than ever he had thought a woman could be—Satanita at her savagest!

"*Cannibale!*" she hissed. "Imbecile *écossais!* You have killed yourself!" Then she lifted up her voice and screamed:

"Help! Help! Help! Kill him! Let him die, now! Slay quickly! He is a traitor—would betray us! Kill!"

There was a rush, and Andry seized a chair. A hundred—more than a hundred—surged through the doors from either side. A knife, launched by a big Italian in the middle of the door that Dick had burst, whizzed at him—was seen as it flashed under the light—and stopped, caught in the sword-hilt.

"Take it, Andry!"

Dick's eyes were on the big Italian, but he waited long enough for Andry to reach out and wrench the knife from between the steel of the basket-hilt. Then he moved—and the Italian faded—leaving a gap in the doorway where he had been. And the

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football field at school had taught Dick what to do with an opening.

It was a fight that Sudanese might envy while it lasted—all rush and slash and thrust and roar—all movement—a terrific impact—the hot, delirious feel of blood, back-squirted as the sword went in—the crash of a broken chair on human skulls as Andry widened the breach that Richard carved—a charge into blackness, where the cold steel was all that glimmered—and a burst with a wild hurrah into God's good midnight air, where a carriage—a two-horse carriage—waited at the corner, and a driver slept.

Dick leaped for the box, and Andry sprang inside.

"Madame—where is madame?" asked the driver, waking up. But Dick's fist took him neatly underneath the jaw, and he toppled to the street gurgling. Then the two horses started to assimilate a lesson.

They went off as the five-furlong lined-up horses do on Epsom Downs, to the crack of a whip and the growled "Get-on-there" that moves animals and crowds so infinitely faster than bad language. They left their dust and the noise of bumping wheels for the dogs and the night to wonder at, and they took square corners as no fire-engine, since brigades had being, dared to turn. They went as the guns go into action. And the course Dick chose for them was far and away from straight.

By guesswork, and by sheer dead-reckoning, avoiding tram-lines and the streets where fixed-point policemen stood and yawned, criss-crossing side-lanes and chancing anything and everything but recognition, Dick drove at the most prodigious flog for the shore—for the darkest part of the harbor-front. At a yell from Andry he leaned back hard and swung his weight on the right-hand rein. It broke as the horses pawed the air above the water—but they managed it. The good, game, weary beasts contrived to keep their feet and their balance, and to swing 'round, clear.

Dick and Andry sprang from the carriage, and a last lash of the whip sent the horses galloping free in the direction of the city, with the empty carriage swaying in their wake.

"Look!" said Dick. "Jump for it!"

There was a boat, with three rowers in it, moored to a buoy some fourteen feet out from the shore. The rowers slept. Dick jumped first. He landed absolutely in the middle of the bottom of the boat, and fell headlong over one of the natives, frightening him almost out of his skin. Andry followed with a groan and a monumental effort. He hit the water, like a whale descending, four feet short. Dick hauled him in.

"Know the *Themistokles?*" he asked. "The other harbor, eh? Well—take us there—give way—hurry up!"

The still sleepy native crew gave way. They were too accustomed to the manners and peculiarities of drunken first-class passengers from ships to be suspicious, and too interested in the money they would earn to hesitate. A half-hour's row—for they had to search for the little ship—brought them alongside, and a sleepy watchman welcomed them.

"How much d'you want?" asked Dick.

"Ten shillings," said the owner of the boat; for the 'longshoremen of Alexandria are neither pessimists nor shy.

"I'll give you a pound," said Dick, "if you'll lie alongside here till the steamer leaves."

"Very good, sir," said the boatman with a grin.

"Remember! Stay alongside all the time. I may need you at any minute."

"A pound," said Andry with a wry face, "is an awfu' lot of money, sir!"

"It's cheap," said Dick. "It would cost us more than that, Andry, if they went back to the city and told tales!"

"Ou-aye!" said Andry. "Aye! Did ye kill any? I broke four skulls that I'm sure of—mebbe five—would God I'd hit that big Eyetalian where I aimed for!"

"Shut up, you idiot!" ordered Dick.

## VI

THE *Themistokles* — one thousand tons — one class of passengers — Greek flag—mixed cargo—anything for anywhere—was due to start a little after dawn. When Dick and Andry boarded her a whiff of steam betrayed the fact that her "chief" was warming cylinders. Unless you carry cotton, there is not much cargo to be picked up south of Jaffa on that run, and her derricks were swung in and lashed; the last bumboat had warped away from her soon after midnight.

But she was a liner in her way, and her way was to wait for sunrise; no amount of

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concentrated irritation — nervousness—excitement—funk, he called it—on Dick's part helped to hasten her departure.

Andry went below—unpacked certain valises—changed into dry clothes and stowed away the sword. Thenceforward the two of them paced up and down the little after-deck, one on either side—Andry prayerful, Dick fuming, and both of them taut-strung to jumping-point. Each launch that left the quay-side was a police launch to their excited vision; each shout ashore was a hue and cry; each minute of delay was like an hour of crucifixion.

They exchanged no word. They walked the deck and waited, each knowing what the other thought too well to waste breath. Andry was wondering whether it would be wise or helpful to fight when the police turned up to arrest them; Dick wondered how far it was right to accept another's service, however willingly it might be given.

"Andry!" he said after a while, when the tenth false alarm had set their hearts to fluttering against their ribs. The huge man hove alongside, and fell into step.

"To cut a long story short, Andry my man, if we get out of this mess safely, this is where we part company. Listen, d'you hear me?—I don't want argument! What I say is final. It was all very well for me to accept your service at a time when I was an independent man of means. When you joined me in the Channel, I was a British officer—true, in the Territorials, but a British officer. Now I'm a fugitive! Then, I could draw a certain income from home at any time—a small income, but a certain one. Now—I have considerably less than a thousand pounds, and positively no prospects. If I were to draw on London for any of my income, I imagine the authorities would get on my trail at once. Are you listening?"

"Aye."

"I've been photographed with a drawn sword, surrounded by a crowd of known criminals. I suppose about a hundred men would swear in a court of law that I am a rebel. It seems I was overheard calling myself a rebel—in Cairo—to no less than a Commissioner. It's easy to laugh, but it would not be easy—I imagine—to prove myself innocent. Do you follow me so far? Very well. I've no right to drag you down into my quagmire, and I've no intention of doing it. At the first port we reach—provided we get away from here—I shall pay your passage back home again, and buy you a draft on Glasgow for a hundred pounds. That will put you where you were before. Do you understand me?"

"Aye."

"Very well, then."

"Is that all, sir?"

"That's all."

"Then hear me now! D'ye ken where I was before ye accepted my service, as ye call it? I was in the water—aye—swummin'—verra nearly drooned. Ye're big enough—ye're strong enough—tae put me back in again—an' I give ye leave. *Then*—I'd be where I was. Ye've a right to do that—an' no more."

He stood—facing Dick—grim—a little bit resentful—silhouetted in the first faint promise of the dawn.

"But—unless ye do that—I'm y'r man, Mr. Dicky—at y'r ser-r-vice—verra much so—an'—" for a second his voice shook—"if ye choose to mak' y'r bed in hell, I'll come along an' bur-r-rn with ye!"

Dick smiled a little. He was not much given to displaying the more serious emotions; they lay too deep.

"I didn't ask you to follow me in the first place," he asserted.

"Ye can get rid of me one way," said Andry.

Dick did not answer him. When another man was speaking he usually let him finish without interjected answers.

"If I'm no *use*—if ye don't *want* me—if ye blame me f'r makkin' all the trouble—if ye don't trust me ony mair—say so, an' I'll gang awa'!"

Dick still said nothing.

"I didn't hear ye speak, sir."

"I didn't speak."

Andry touched his forelock—and Dick held out his hand. For the second time, for the selfsame reason, Andry's eyes watered while the blood crept backward up his wrist.

And then they had a genuine alarm. A boat put out from the shore and came alongside. But it proved to be the ship's Captain with his clearance papers, and news of more passengers; the ship was to lie at her moorings twenty minutes longer.

Cursing the extra delay and the more than doubled risk of being recognized or sought for, now that daylight had aroused the world to action, Dick leaned over the

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stern and watched the sun. While he watched, a sound he knew too well drove spurs into his soul, and the spurs had red-hot rowels on them. Just as nothing could have made him skulk in the secrecy of his cabin to escape recognition, so nothing now could have made him spare himself the sight that he knew would rend his heartstrings. He deliberately turned—deliberately stood where the best view could be had—and deliberately watched.

The air was shimmering spun gold beneath a roofless blue. The city was opal, stained here and there with shadows, kissed by the dawn and sweet, as no other hour would see it. The setting was a semi-Eastern, semi-European panorama, foreshortened by a varied crowd of masts. And the pipes skirled through it all—bagpipes, fifes, and drums.

The moving gold he watched was the sunlight caught on brass and the dull dark khaki of a Highland regiment. It was moving Might—quick-tramping—clean—obedient—in kilts—the tempered edge of order that had cut dominion out of desert sand, and could cut again—eight hundred fighting Scotsmen, picking up their feet clean after forty miles by night, and swinging best foot foremost! God! He—Richard Anthony—of Arran, by the grace of God—stood mourning for his birthright. His father had led that actual battalion! Andry, watching behind him, listened to his heavy breathing, and felt the full throb of hell held in.

The little liner's whistle screamed impatiently, but with due consideration of the cost of steam. Dick had lost his eagerness to get away. He watched—unconscious of the time. A launch came alongside and disgorged some passengers. The companion-ladder was hauled up and in. The steamer screamed again. The winch began to swallow steel chain with a roar as the windward kedge came home. But Dick watched spell-bound.

Then the little ship's propeller started turning with the steady, hypnotizing *thug* that calls more men than ever sails did. Alexandria began to fall away astern, and the chance of arrest grew insignificant. But Dick still stood there, gazing—gazing. He could hear the pipes. He could still detect the dancing glint of serried arms.

He felt a pluck at his arm, but he did not turn. Then a more deliberate tug at his coat-sleeve drew his attention, and he looked 'round—straight into the eyes of the Princess Olga Karageorgovich!

"I think we both had a very narrow squeeze for it!" she said in exquisitely shaded English. "But—" and she tapped him with a remonstrating finger—"you owe me for a two-horse carriage, Mr. Anthony! Remember—I shall claim the debt!"

**The next adventure of *Dick Anthony of Arran* will appear complete in the next issue.**

# THE WEST

By BERTON BRALEY

NOW it isn't just in Denver and it isn't just in Butte,
Nor in San Francisco lying by the bay;
And it's not alone in places where the long six-shooters shoot
(That's a sort of thing that's almost passed away).
No; the West is but a spirit formed of daring and of youth
And of tenderness and frolic and of jest,
Of a love for men and women and for honor and for Truth—
And wherever these are gathered—it's the West!

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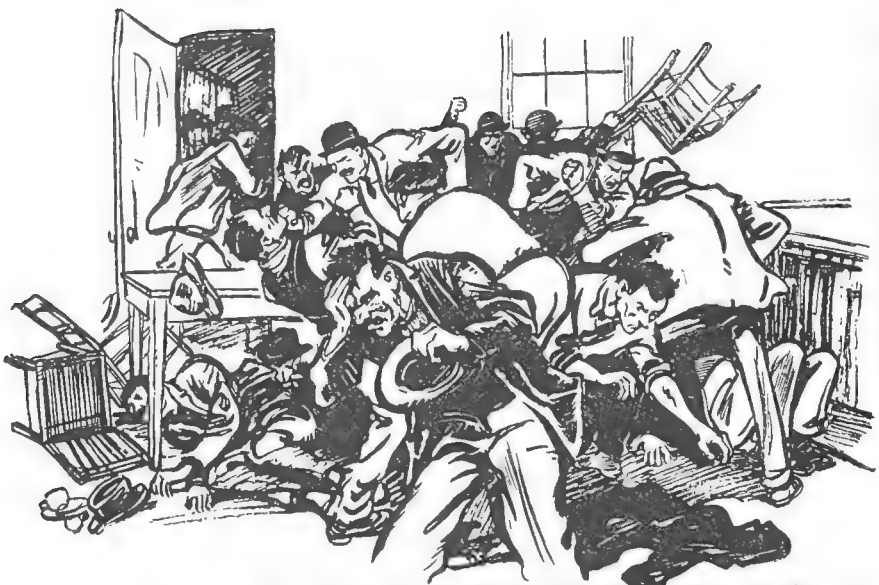

# U.S. SPELLS US.

## *by* George Vaux Bacon

"IT AIN'T the standin' on one's feet so much," said George, the presiding genius of the Gary Hotel bar, wearily, as he squeezed a lime into my whisky and shot the star glass across the mahogany. "It's the everlastin' line o' chatter the boobs float in an' simper across the counter to me wot makes me gray an' tired an' wish I was a minister on three hundred a year instead o' my princely twelve hundred. I no more gets on the job in the mornin' but some pompadoured pe'fect devil wid a high collar an' a pair o' ribboned pumps on his footsies comes glitterin' through the swingin' door an' leanin' up against this here frontier of all nations, pipes:

"'H'w are y'u, George? Slip us a whisky an' absinth, George. Gee, me an' the bunch certainly had some time last night. We was over to Snider's pool-room, an' in comes Jimmy Schwartz an' Nig Corcoran an' starts a game o' riot wid the ivories. I blew my pay-check through flashes o' craps wot would have made the Aurorer Borealis look like the wrong side of a vaudeville drop. The jinx was certainly on me. We stayed up till three bells, an' I comes home wid the milkman. The ol' lady was waitin' fer me when I lights back to the dump—say, George, are you married?' An' I'm saved from furder torture from him by a large party wid an auto-joy-ride story wot wants a ginger-ale highball."

"It certainly is a fierce world all right," I opined, choking back with reluctance the story of a fight I had had with a cop the day before owing to a desire on my part to climb one of the traction company's trolley poles and a resultant argument as to the legality thereof. "I should think you'd quit the game."

"That's the worst of it, pard," said George, pouring out a glass of buttermilk with an air of disgust for an elderly party with pinkish side-whiskers. "I've got so much in touch wid human nature over this here bar that, wid all its drawbacks, I loves my profession. When the shades o' night are fallin' an' the guys come driftin' in fer their evenin' poison, I loves to glimpse all the queer-lookin' thirsty faces lined up in front o' me



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an' wonder wot in the name o' Mike they're fur."

"Most of them are loving husbands an' fathers, I suppose," I ventured. "Just because a man likes a bit o' the potheen once in a while doesn't say that he's a bloody, bold, bad bandit of the boulevards, don't you know."

"I don't," said George. "I don't know nothin'. When I was twenty, I knew what was right an' wrong. Now I can't even keep track o' the price o' coal. What has we hard-workin' common people to do wid theology? I asks."

There was an air about George's last remark that suggested to me that something was in his mind, and George is some cat of a story-teller when he gets started, believe me, Arabella.

"What made you think of theology, George?" I asked.

George mixed a cocktail for a nice-looking man with a beautiful pink nose, and returning to my end of the bar, replied:

"I've been thinkin' o' Nosey Conners an' Micky O'Toole this evenin', an' the thoughts of 'em have led me to several speculations as to whether the immigrants should be allowed into the country if they can't read. Not that that was the main idea what engrossed me. Far from it. I was tryin' to imagine what the United States would be like wid a President named Steve Galovic or Mike Vukadonovic or Ivan Bartkowski. That's what I was thinkin', and me mind ran back along the little grooves o' me memory to somethin' that happened a year or so back."

"You're off at six, aren't you, George?" I asked.

"I am that, for two hours," agreed George.

"Have dinner with me," I suggested.

"I will, your Honor," said George, "and thanks to you."

At the hour we repaired to the café across the street which the *illuminati* (that is Latin for lit up) used for meals between drinks. After breaking bread with me and being given a cigar, George told his tale:

THE truth of the matter is, of course, that under General Washington we freed this country from the bloody yoke o' the accursed British and opened its gates as an asylum for all the people of the world who were oppressed for one thing or another, and they've been comin' over an' makin' money out of us ever since. Which is all well an' good. Far be it from me to object to any one makin' the coin; but I'm driftin' from what I was goin' to tell you.

Nosey O'Conner was the most talented real-estate salesman the city of Chicago ever produced. He sold real estate for years without gettin' caught; but finally, when he landed a St. Louis brewer for a thousand acres of land half way between Milwaukee and South Haven an' literally covered wid empty pop an' beer bottles that had been cast overboard on it from passin' excursion boats durin' the past twenty-five years, he left Chicago, an' bein' a brave man an' also not much at runnin' away from anythin', came down to Gary, where at the time I was pumpin' suds an' pushin' the same across the bar at George O'Donnell's in Whisky Row. It was about four in the afternoon that Nosey wandered into George's for a drink an' I lamps him the minute he comes around the lookin'-glass at the street end o' the bar.

"H'w are y'u, George," he begins.

"I'm fine, Mr. O'Conner," I says, "thank you. An' how's yourself?"

"It's in a bad way I am, George," says Nosey.

"Sure," I says, "what can the matter be?"

"You're a brave lad, George," says he, "an' not one to meddle wid the likes of a cop."

"You're right, there, Mr. O'Conner," I says. "There's lots o' fine boys on the force; but I hate a cop."

"Me conscience is troublin' me, George," says Nosey, "an' I'm thinkin' it would do me a bit o' good to tell you what I'm thinkin'."

"Go as far as you like, Mr. O'Conner," I says. "The Lord knows I won't tell nothin' you tell me."

"If there's a big Mick wid a jaw like a battle-ship come into the place this evenin', George," he says confidential, "an' asks if the likes o' me has been around, tell him you never heard o' me, save that your sister who married me brother Tim happened to remark to you as you was comin' down to work this mornin' that she'd heard from her husband that I'd left fur Frisco yesterday."

"You're talkin' o' Micky O'Toole, the Government gum-shoe, I take it," I says.

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"It might be him I'm speakin' of, at that," says Nosey.

He orders a drink an' throws it down with the grace of a true Derry man.

"It's the mails this time, I suppose," I says.

"Mebbe," says Nosey. "Good luck to you, George. Do you know, I find the atmosphere of San Francisco fine this evenin'? I think I'll be after takin' a walk down Market Street."

Wid which he walks out o' the door an' goes down Broadway. He was a subtle bit of a lad, was that Nosey O'Conner.

IT WAS the likes o' three hours that passed, durin' which the bunch from the American Bridge blows in an' raises a little rough an' so forth, keepin' things livened up a bit, an' business was brisk, it bein' a pay-night at the mills, w'en I looks up from mixin' a rickey an' sees Mickey O'Toole standin' in front o' me.

"Give us a bit of a drink, George," he says, leanin' on the bar easy-like.

"What is it you'll be wantin', Mr. O'Toole?" I asks.

"A little o' your private stock. The boys at the hotel tell me you have the finest in Gary."

I gives him one o' the bottles an' he pours himself out a nobleman's drink and throws it down. It's by the way a man drinks whisky you can mark his breed. No man should take it at all who can't take it like the whale took Jonah.

"Do you happen to know of a fellow named Nosey O'Conner, George?" he asks.

"I do that," I says, "but slightly. His brother married me sister. I was the eldest child. She was the eleventh."

"You don't mind havin' seen your distant relation about here within the week, do you?" he asks softly.

"I don't know that I do," I says, "but me memory's bad."

"You do say, now!" says Micky. "Well, that's a shame! You knew me all right."

"Sure," I says. "Who don't? You're a detective."

"I'll be plain wid you, George," he says. "Nosey sold a thousand acres o' land right in the middle o' Lake Michigan to a St. Louis Dutchman, an' the Dutchman's sore as blazes, and it bein' as Nosey was fool enough to make his sale by the mails, the Government's on his trail. Do you get me?"

"Sure," I says. "I get you; but what's that to me?"

"Nothin'," says Micky, "only I was sittin' in the café acrost the way when I seen Nosey walk out o' here three hours ago."

"If that's the case," I says, "why didn't you pinch him?"

"Sure he was around the corner o' Tenth Avenue an' gone before I could get me pipe out o' me mouth an' reach the door," said Micky.

"It's funny I didn't recognize him," I says.

"It is that, George," he says. "I'm thinkin' I ought to show him to you so's you'll be knowin' your famous relations. Have you an assistant?"

"You can't take me off the job to follow you around, Mickey," I says. "There's a lot o' thirsty men here, an' we're relievin' 'em under a Government license that's as good as your badge."

"Whist you now, George," says Micky. "I could pinch you fur leadin' astray an officer of the Government what rules you. Come along wid me. It's a bit of stubbornness on me part."

Which it was an' nothin' else, him bein' sore that I didn't tell him straight out that Nosey had been in the bar talkin' to me. To please him I takes off me apron, hands it to the furriner what was workin' at the free lunch, an' goes through the front door on to Broadway wid Micky.

WE WALKS down the street together in the dusk, me sayin' nothin', feelin' around in me mind whether to be insulted or not at the way he treats me, a self-respectin' barkeep, when he branches off Broadway an' down Fourteenth Street into the Patch, as they call it in Gary, where the furriners all live, an' a rotten dirty place it is, with not a bathtub within a mile, I'm tellin' you, an' the English language an' soap as scarce as an Irishman at a peace conference.

"You know your way around pretty well, Mr. O'Toole," I says.

"I do that," says Micky, wid a grin.

Along about a block furder there was one o' these here coffee-houses an' poolrooms run by a Greek named Aristides Papakoupoulos, the same bein' a dump where a lot of the furriners hung out, eatin' that there *paklava* them Greeks make an' drinkin' Turkish coffee, which by the Powers is as

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strong as any whisky ever was. As we reached the front o' the place, Micky grabs me arm wid a grip that'd put a dent in an I-beam.

"Come on in, George," he says.

I follows him into the place where a bunch o' wicked-lookin' Slavonian bandits were plottin' against somethin' over a mess o' little tables. Sittin' in a corner wid no door near fur him to get away by is Nosey O'Connor, readin' a newspaper as calm as you please.

There was a good deal o' noise in the place, an' Nosey didn't look up from the paper as we come in.

"Have a cup o' coffee wid me, George," says Micky.

"I'll do that," I says, "wid pleasure, your Honor."

We sits at one o' the little tables an' I tries to choke down some o' the coffee, while I watches Micky keepin' track o' Nosey over in the corner out o' the corner of his eye. I knew then the big brute loved to play wid his prey like a cat wid a mouse, an' fur that I hated him.

WHILE I was doin' so, in comes one o' them immaculate educated furrin guys who're always sayin' they're goin' to inherit a big estate in Austria or some such place, an' in the meantime pretend they're lawyers an' make money by beatin' their ignorant countrymen out o' money. Wid him was a little fellow wid eyeglasses who I knew was a reporter on one o' the Gary newspapers. A puny little fellow he was, wid a round head on a thin neck, an' looked like a pea on a toothpick.

The furrin Count gets to talkin' wid a bunch o' the bandits, an' the little fellow comes moseyin' over toward us.

"H'w are y'u, George?" he asks, an' sits down wid us.

"How's yourself?" I says, wishin' to be polite, an' amused to see how Mickey stared wrathful at the newspaper guy.

"Rotten, thanks," says the little reporter, grinnin' happily back at Mickey. "Every time I think o' my pay it makes me sick an' today's pay-day."

"That's tough," I says. "Have a cup o' coffee wid us."

"I will," he says. "Thank you."

Whereupon the Count brings over some o' the brigands, an' is introduced by the reporter, an' they all sit down. The conversation, as was natural, gets turned on nationality, an' the reporter an' one o' the bandits gets arguin' about the Balkan War.

Mickey kept watchin' Nosey, an' Nosey still kept readin' his paper widout once lookin' up.

After a while I notice the bandit an' the reporter gets kind o' scrappy in their conversation, an' at the same time I kept wonderin' if there weren't some way o' gettin' Nosey away from Mickey. I hate to see a man pinched, I do that.

The reporter an' the bandit get hotter an' hotter. The furriner starts makin' some remark about America in general in his broken English, finally, that didn't sound good at all, at all, from a fellow what left his own country to come here an' live on our money. Bein' born in County Cork meself, an' an American by tradition, which is stronger than birth, I didn't like it meself. The little reporter sets his little glasses tighter on his nose an' looks the big Hun straight in the eye, and says in a quiet, refined voice:

"You're a deuce of a proposition, you are, an' you give me a pain in me stomach so I feel like throwin' up all the rotten furrin junk I've drank in this place. You come over to this country wid one dirty rag to your back an' an ignorance bigger an' deeper than the Atlantic Ocean, an' you find a job fur yerself, free schools fur the childer, an' every opportunity in the world to make somethin' o' yerself if you're man enough to take a hold o' life wid a good strong grip an' do somethin' worth while.

"What do you do? You get a little money here an' then go back where you come from, fur which thank goodness; but in the meantime you stand around an' criticize a nation o' people that have done more in a hundred years than any other people ever did in a couple o' thousand, savin' only mebbe the Irish, an' as a matter o' fact, you dirty brute, you yourself can neither read nor write, an' never take a bath. Go on back to your bleedin' little hole of a country an' stay there. We won't miss you."

Wid that the big Hun takes a swipe at the little fellow, cussin' somethin' horrible in his crazy language an' levelin' the vilest names at the United States in somethin' like English I ever heard. The little fellow don't wait a minute; but wid a kind o' puny growl, makes a jump at the big Hun, who o' course throws him off wid ease, an' then starts in to pummel him, throwin' him to

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the floor. The little fellow starts to get up right away again, though, an' starts again fur what was certain destruction.

HE DIDN'T get more than half to his feet, however, before Nosey O'Conner quietly drops his paper, looks at Micky, sees the situation, an' walkin' over grabs the furriner by the shoulder an' gives him a paste in the jaw that knocks him clean across the room.

"I'm glad to see you, Mr. O'Toole," he says; then, turnin' to Micky, "an' I guess you an' me has a little trip to make; but I'm plumb surprised that an Irishman what calls himself a gentleman would allow anything like that to insult the Government he works fur. D'y'u get me, Micky?"

Micky looked back at Nosey, starin' hard, an' turned the color of an onion; but he didn't have time to say nothin' if he had intended to do so, fur the whole bunch o' bandits jumps at once on the four of us like a pack o' wolves, except the Count, who stood to one side an' watched wid a satirical look.

There was four of us against twelve, an' one of us was a little shrimp, an' he got beat up somethin' awful, though he managed to keep two men busy till I got to 'em before he crumpled up. We slung them furriners around somethin' beautiful, an' as I pasted one big Bulgar in the jaw I looks up an' sees somethin' which enables me to clean up three Montenegrins an' a Greek wid ease.

Nosey an' Micky were fightin' side by side, like mad, an' I knowed the blood o' them, an' that Nosey was goin' to get his chance. The little reporter, his face like the inside of a cranberry pie, lay doubled up an' unconscious at me feet; but his fists were still doubled up; and then, in a minute, the whole bunch runs out into the street—what was left o' the bunch, I should have said—an' hollers fur a cop, whereupon one o' the big Scandinavian policemen they have in Gary comes runnin' in wid a revolver shakin' in one hand an' his billy in the other.

"Here, here!" he hollers wid an accent like an oyster talkin' French. "Wot's the matter here?"

"Why," I says to him, kickin' an unconscious Servian out o' me way an' advancin' toward him, "who told you there was anythin' the matter here? Can't you see we've just been havin' a quiet little meetin'?"

What wid eleven—or twenty-one, I forget which, now—lyin' unconscious on the floor, the Swede looks at me suspicious.

"I think you've had a fight," he says.

"A fight?" I asks, amazed-like. "You're crazy. There was not a one of them that was Irish."

"I think I'll run you three fellows in an' let you tell it to the judge in the mornin'," says the cop, kind o' slow, lookin' at the eleven on the floor an' the three of us at the same time.

"I wouldn't," says I, "or we'll want to know why the furriner that started this shindy is allowed to talk treason an' things against the Government. Show the cop your badge, Micky."

Wid which Micky shows his badge, an' the cop gets scared. In his own country they kill a man fur criticizin' the King's taste in socks, an' besides the furriners know the Government is the one thing they haven't been able to run so far, an' they're scared of it.

WHEN Micky showed the badge, I noticed the Count who was goin' to inherit the estate in Austria look kind o' funny an', when us an' the cop got on good terms, start to make a break fur the door.

"Grab that man, officer!" says Micky, admittin' to me later, as he did, that he hadn't any idea why he did it except that he didn't like the looks o' the fellow.

The Scandinavian in the brass buttons reaches fur the Count, who tries to dodge, so that the cop pulls off his hat. Wid it comes a wig, an' the count winds up in the grip o' the cop showin' a head o' bright red hair.

Micky takes a jump in the air and grips me hand.

"Whist, George!" he says. "That's Count von Fulster, the greatest little professional smuggler in the world, I'll bet me head against a jug o' Jamaica rum. We've been tryin' to find him fur a year an' a half—an' him hidin' here wid the rest o' the furriners! Ain't you the cute one!"

Sayin' which he grabs the red-head by the shoulder an' looks over his face careful.

"Every sign of it!" he says. "You could sleep on a corkscrew, you're that crooked, y' aristocratic carrot!"

And without another word he starts to walk out wid the Count.

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"Here, Micky," says Nosey all of a sudden, "you forgot me."

"You," says Micky, "who in blazes are you to call me by me first name? You're a grown man, ain't you? You don't need a trained nurse. I ain't no chaperon. Good night."

An' he walks out wid the Count.

"Well, what d' y'u think o' that?" says Nosey to me.

"Me?" I says. "Nothin'; but let's pick up the little reporter an' carry him out wid us. He's not much to look at; but he fought like the dickens. He must be Irish too."

Nosey left fur the Coast that night an' is there to this day, fur all I know, behavin' himself.

ALL of which is what suggested my remark.

There are a lot o' fightin' furriners; but when we Americans stick together—there's nothin' in the world can lick the Irish!

But it's the cheapness o' them Huns that bothers me. Nosey only had to pay the big one five dollars t' insult America an' start the fight, an' the rest backed him up fur a dollar apiece.

# COME-ON CHARLEY

## Deals in Radium

*by* Thomas Addison

THE traffic squad smiled, and some of them saluted, as the big yellow touring-car rolled up Broadway. Leaning back in the tonneau was a compactly built, muscular young man in a sober gray business suit and olive felt hat. His eyes were hazel and serious-looking, and his broad and not ill-favored face was expressive of such absolute good nature that you liked it offhand.

On the seat with this young man lounged an individual in gorgeous raiment. A gardenia bloomed on his fawn-colored cutaway coat. A glowworm scarf of knitted mauve silk embraced a choking collar, and was knotted over an incandescent shirt of fine linen strewn with violets like a May mead. His hands were gloved in lavender and rested negligently on the ivory knob of a wanghee cane, and beneath an English bowler a pair of china-blue eyes above a drooping auburn mustache received with languid relish the startled glances of the world.

The car was traffic-stalled at Thirty-eighth Street. A big, black-haired man standing on the corner talking with a much smaller man suddenly grasped his companion's arm and whispered earnestly:

"Al, there's Come-On Charley now—in the lemon hearse! The gink this way with the green lid."

The little man covertly sized up Mr. Charles Arthur Carter. His mouth, which had a queer left-sided downward slant, fairly drooled.

"Two millions!" he muttered. "Why, shoot me, but he looks as if you could step

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up and take it out of his hand! Who's the bird of paradise with him, Nick?"

The big man showed a fine set of teeth.

"Anybody'd know you're from the country, Albert. Didn't they have a thing in the Chicago papers about this brace of ducks? The old town pump ain't better known than they are on the Little Lane. That's Mr. Percival Teeters, Come-On's private secretary. They call him here on Broadway Merciful Skeeters. Somebody wished the name on him, and it stuck."

"And they let 'em out like this without a keeper? You must be conning me, Nick, on the radium frame-up. All we've got to do is to ask them for the money and go and spend it."

The blockade broke and the car moved on. So did the two gentlemen crooks.

The big man was right. If there was a *bona-fide* New Yorker who had not heard of Come-On Charley he was dead or dying. Mr. Carter's picture, and his secretary's, were stock cuts in Park Row; their lives were embalmed in print with daily incidents added; and the Great White Way had taken them to its scintillating bosom and nursed them to the full flower of their proclivities.

Why, any bootblack could tell you Come-On Charley's story! How he was starving to death on six a week in a shoe factory hidden somewhere in New Jersey; how a lawyer from New York went over there and handed Charley two million dollars in a bag his uncle in Siam had willed to him; how Charley bought all the booze in town and served it out of bathtubs; how he hired Merciful Skeeters away from a lunch counter to shoo the con men off; and how, leaving his fellow townsmen soused to the ears, he came to the Big Village on a special train with a brass band and Ellery Maginnis' Singing Blondes, and played a two-weeks' engagement at Bannerstein's that made you laugh yet in your sleep when you dreamed about it!

All this in the main, as the bootblack might tell it, would be correct, and it is not the province of this historian to halt the action of the present tale to rectify certain small exaggerations which concern a previous story. He will simply state that Charley, thanks to Mr. Samuel Drew, his attorney, was credited by the public with the possession of two million dollars. Whether Charley himself credited Mr. Drew is food for speculation; but he lived as if he did, being economical only in the matter of speech—a virtue which many a man of greater parts might emulate.

The ten-thousand-dollar "starter" which Charley had received from the lawyer was increased to eighteen thousand through his deal with Ellery Maginnis, and his expenses to date totaled three thousand dollars. As only three weeks had passed since the former shoe clerk's rise to the rôle of money king, this, you might say, was going some; yet his augmented bank balance showed that he was not going backward—and therein, beloved reader, lies the difference between a flash in the pan and the fat in it.

Charley, as we see him now, was returning in a livery automobile from a fruitless trip downtown to Mr. Drew's office. It was just a friendly call he had wished to make, but the lawyer was not in—or, at least, he was not visible; he had reasons which induced him to a modest retirement from his client's view for the present. So Charley left his card, as a gentleman should, and came away.

The yellow car was blocked again a few squares farther on, though but for a moment. Short as the pause was, it sufficed for a little black-and-white sign in a lower-story window on the cross-street to catch Mr. Percival Teeters' roving eye. It was merely a quack-doctor's decoy for those of simple faith, and the body of the text was too small to be read from where Mr. Teeters sat; but a featured word, standing out boldly from the others, arrested his attention—

RADIUM

Mr. Teeters' mustache wiggled in a way it had when he was disturbed of mind. He nudged his companion, and pointed at the sign with his cane. "Radium!" he ejaculated. "Radium! See it, Come-On?"

"Sure," said Charley placidly.

"That thing's got my goat," declared Mr. Teeters irritably.

"Forget it," Charley counseled him.

"They won't let me," complained the secretary. "Every day we get a card shoved at us through the mail with just that word on it—not a thing more, not even a fly-speck. I'm getting bughouse on it. Radium!"

"Drop it," said Charley. "Think about the weather."

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THE big machine was purring on its way once more, and presently it rounded off from Broadway and swung up to the curb at the Hotel Rirebien as softly as a cat that has trailed a bird to a bush. The doorman came running out to meet them, and his smile was as genuine as his name was not. They called him Pierre in the hotel to match the menu, and at home his wife called him Mike as a match for Maggie.

"A grand day, Mr. Carter, sor. Not too war-rum," he observed in his finest French.

"Bully," returned Charley. He jumped out and asked, "Is Joe Link here?"

"He is, sor." Pierre's face was aglow. "An' he tells me, Mr. Carter, ye're the hardest hitting amachure he iver put de mitts on wid."

"Good old sport, Joe," said Charley, and went inside; but Mr. Teeters lingered. He addressed the doorman in a confidential tone.

"Say, Pear, what's radium?"

"What's what?" Pierre scanned his questioner suspiciously. He loved Charley, but he couldn't go to that extent with his secretary.

"R-a-d-i-u-m, radium," repeated Mr. Teeters. "What in hog's name is it, Pear?"

Pierre, perceiving he was confronted with ignorance denser than his own, gave the only Gallic gesture in his repertory: he shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, ray-day-un!" he mouthed. "That? It's that new liniment they be advertising—good fer man or baste."

He slapped-to the door of the tonneau, and turned to speak with the chauffeur. Mr. Teeters walked into the hotel, frowning and far from satisfied.

Charley was talking with Joe Link, the middle-weight ex-champion of the United States. Joe came from Pierre's home county, and his French was just as good, with perhaps a bit more of polish. Mr. Teeters nodded to him, and went on to the desk to get his mail. It was a handsome handful, for the beggars had not yet ceased petitioning Mr. Carter for plums from his pie.

The secretary shuffled through the bunch of letters with an air of expectation. When he came to a large square envelope typed with Charley's name he stepped quickly over to that gentleman and poked the letter under his nose. From the ladies' lounge in the corridor, just beyond the elevator shaft, a pair of bright blue eyes was taking note of them.

"Radium! Betcher cigars," barked Mr. Teeters.

"Open it," commanded Charley.

Mr. Teeters did so. Squarely in the center of a gilt-edged correspondence card was printed the fateful word. Mr. Teeters gave forth a crackling sound, which was his own natural way of expressing laughter.

"I can guess the little pea every time," he exulted.

Charley looked bored.

"Let's go up, Joe," he suggested. "Want to learn that double hook."

He started for the elevator, but Mr. Teeters flung out a detaining hand. He was sniffing the card as a dog would a strange bone.

"It's from a woman!" he cried triumphantly. "It's scented."

"By George!" exclaimed Charley, to whom all womankind was a pleasurable mystery. "Never put me wise before, Skeeters."

"The others," said Mr. Teeters darkly, "didn't have any more scent than a doorknob. What's radium, Joe—a new kind of smell?"

Mr. Link pondered his reply with middleweight deliberation.

"It's something for your liver—like epsom salts," he answered with conviction.

"Get some, Percy. I haven't got a liver," grinned Charley.

He marched toward the elevator with the ex-champion. Mr. Teeters remained behind, still fingering the card and mumbling the mystic word. The bright eyes watching Mr. Carter from the ladies' lounge grew brighter as he approached, and the young woman to whom they belonged arose and sauntered down the corridor. She was gowned all in black—a brilliantly beautiful butterfly imprisoned in the weeds of widowhood.

This superb young creature met Charley a step or two beyond the elevator door, and paused directly in his path. She had missed her glove. She wheeled slowly, searching the floor for it. It had fallen almost at her feet, and Charley sprang to retrieve it. As he restored it to her she looked into his eyes and murmured her thanks in a voice so soft, yet so thrilling, that Charley felt cold chills run up and down his spine. He stood staring after her.



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"Some dame, that," commented Mr. Link unemotionally, and strode into the waiting cage. "Coming, boss?"

Charley pulled himself together and followed the fighting-man.

"Guess I'm kind of groggy," he stammered. "She hit me, Joe—with her eyes!"

Mr. Teeters had seen the incident of the glove. As the woman came toward him on her way to the street he inflated his narrow chest and stiffened his long legs. Years since he had convinced himself that his appearance was fatally prepossessing, and this belief was in no wise diminished now that he was arrayed as the lilies of the field.

The lady in black lowered her eyes in delightful confusion before Mr. Teeters' fixed regard, yet she did not altogether lose her presence of mind; for as she passed him her lips framed a familiar vocable and let it fall upon his ear.

"Radium," she breathed.

The secretary stepped on his own foot, so greatly startled was he. And then, floating back to him, came a whiff of perfume that startled him again. He goggled after the receding loveliness, and clapped to his nose the card he still held with thumb and finger.

"Merry Moses!" he cackled. "I guessed it right! It ain't a liniment or liver cure—it's a smell! I want some of that."

He jammed the bunch of letters recklessly into the pockets of the fawn-hued cutaway, and sprinted for the door.

## II

MR. CARTER and Mr. Link were drawn up to a table in the former's private parlor in the Hotel Rirebien. Before Fortune tapped him on the shoulder Mr. Carter had achieved a measure of renown. He was known in his native city as the best boxer the place had produced. And wealth had not changed his devotion to this amiable pursuit; rather did he follow it with greater zest under the expensive tutelage of the celebrated Joseph Link.

Now, pink and glowing from the needle spray in Mr. Carter's bath, the two simple-minded gentlemen were refreshing themselves with cold beef and buttered ale after a strenuous hour with the gloves. It was Mr. Link's theory that one's stomach is not intended as a catch-all for the scourings of a French chef's demented fancy, but as a cherished receptacle for real food; to which, coming from so eminent an authority, Mr. Carter subscribed whole-heartedly.

On this peaceful scene Mr. Teeters exploded himself, so to speak, like a balloon surcharged with gas.

"Gollamighty, Come-On," he burst out, "get up and change your props! Quick!"

"Where's the fire?" inquired Charley staidly.

"Get up!" entreated Mr. Teeters. "I got a date for you a dead man would kick his box off to keep! Get up and fly your colors—the glad rags and happy hat. A lady wants to see you!"

"By George!" said Charley, and looked at Mr. Link.

The middle-weight, who held the narrow-chested secretary in but low esteem, swallowed a huge mouthful of beef and grunted something uncomplimentary to that person's mental status. Mr. Teeters caught it.

"Nuts, am I?" he flung back indignantly. "And you're the guy that drinks radium for your liver! I'm nutty; oh yes, I guess so!"

He crackled with derisive laughter, and leaving Mr. Link's ignorance exposed to view, without even a conjecture wherewith to clothe it, he turned to Charley and said:

"I been picking peaches, Come-On, while you been chewing cow. It's that skirt you let get by you at the elevator."

"By George!" exclaimed Charley once again. This time he laid his knife and fork aside with deliberation and wiped his mouth. "What about her?" he asked, little warm points beginning to show in his eyes.

"What about her?" echoed Mr. Teeters. "Why, I got her in a cage, and the key's hanging 'round my neck—that's all! Slow, ain't I? Slow as a rabbit running from a dog!"

Mr. Link strangled on his ale.

"Rabbit!" he sputtered. "You're a fish—the quickest thing in suckers that ever flapped a fin! They don't need hooks to catch the likes o' you, me laddy buck—just hairpins."

Mr. Teeters scornfully snapped his fingers by way of reply to the pugilist, and addressed himself to his chief.

"Shake a leg, Come-On. You got to make your change and beat it. I promised I'd be back in half an hour; and I got an earful to give you on the way."

He winked secretly at Charley, but Charley gave the signal no acknowledgment.

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"Sit down. Tell it now," Charley ordered.

"But we only got half——"

"Sit down!" iterated Mr. Carter.

"Don't worry, Merciful, me boy," spoke up Mr. Link ironically. "She'll be waiting for you till there's skating in the subway. The fishing's fine through the ice."

He chuckled disagreeably. Mr. Teeters sat down. Twice bidding was Charley's limit. After that, as Mr. Teeters knew, something sudden was apt to happen.

"Go on," Charley charged him. "Tell it."

Mr. Teeters abandoned himself to the inevitable with the ease of habit. He was a fatalist by nature, and refused to kick against the pricks.

"Her name is Inez de Castro," he began. "Some handle, hey? Husband was a Dago. She come sailing by me when you shook her and tipped me the word to get aboard.

"'Radium,' she gurgles, and streaks it for the pave. I was with her in two jumps.

"'What's this radium racket all about?' I asks her. 'Is the stuff good to eat, drink or smell?'

"Say, Come-On, she gimme a look that made my fingernails stop growing. Merry Moses! She's got lamps that'd turn bullets into cream puffs!"

Charley nodded gravely.

"Sure," he said. "I know."

Mr. Link grunted and resorted to his pewter.

"'We can't talk here,' she says," went on Mr. Teeters, now in full enjoyment of his narrative. "'Somebody might hear.' And so I says, 'How about a quiet corner in a gobble house—fizz and fixin's?'

"'No,' she tells me; 'somebody might see. I'm a widow, and a man who was my husband's jinx is scouting for my scalp.'

"She didn't say it just like that," explained Mr. Teeters casually, "but she's in a peck of trouble sure as shooting."

"Take it from me," put in Mr. Link oracularly, "she won't be long. She's picked a nice soft place to dump it."

"Go on, Percy," said Mr. Carter tersely. The secretary complied.

"She gimme her card, and begged me to bring you round to see her, Come-On. She's living with her brother in a flat on Forty-fifth Street. He's laid up with a bum peg and can't trot. I told her I'd have you there in half——"

"Back up!" enjoined Mr. Link. "Where does that radium come in?"

"That's what she wants to put us wise to," replied Mr. Teeters evasively. "She's keeping it for Come-On."

"You bet!" snorted the ex-champion. "The lad with the gravy." He lifted himself out of his chair and walked around to Mr. Teeters' side of the table. "You tell me what this radium gag is, or by Saint Patrick I'll twist your head off and send it to the dame to let her know the rest of you ain't coming!"

Mr. Teeters paled. He was seeing Mr. Link in a mood that was new to him. He wiggled his mustache and glanced appealingly at Charley; but the latter did not heed it. Mr. Link in action was a joy to him.

"Better tell him, Skeeters," he advised. "Don't want to bury you so soon."

"She—she says it's a metal," stuttered the secretary. "A pinch of it is worth a ton of gold. That's all I know. She wouldn't tell me any more then."

"Gee!" was Charley's comment.

MR. LINK sat down and laughed aloud.

"Saints preserve us!" he croaked when he had recovered his breath. "It takes little old New York to hand you out a line like that. It's so raw it's bleeding."

Mr. Teeters peeped at his watch. It was after one.

"How about it, Come-On?" he queried. "She's a queenerino. Just ordinary queens ain't fit to hook her up the back. And she's counting on you. Do we go?"

Whether Mr. Teeters was artfully artless or artlessly artful would be hard to say, but he touched the responsive chord.

"Sure, we go," said Charley.

He got up and looked for his hat. Mr. Link regarded him in stunned astonishment.

"Going to hop right on the fly-paper?" he demanded.

"Can't disappoint a lady," answered Charley.

He found his hat and set it on his head. Mr. Teeters bounded to his feet with a gesture of protest.

"Come-On! You ain't going to change?"

"No," said Charley stolidly.

Mr. Teeters, whose soul could not harbor enmity, turned to Mr. Link as comrade would to comrade.

"What d'ye think of that?" he questioned passionately. "He's got a thousand dollars'

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worth of scenery I made him buy, and he won't wear it! He won't wear it," he repeated, squinting down his lanky length—"and I can't! Gollamighty! I wish they'd cut me on the bias instead of with the grain."

Mr. Link checked the observation on his lips. There was a glint in his patron's eye that warned him to silence. The secretary saw it also.

"Get a move on," bade Charley, and Mr. Teeters quick-stepped it to the door.

"Holy snakes!" grumbled the prize-fighter to himself as he followed them out. "They'd walk into a trap if the name was over it in fireworks."

He was still following them—at a discreet remove, however—when they had left the Hotel Rirebien and were headed toward Forty-fifth Street.

## III

THE winsome widow herself opened the door to Mr. Teeters' knock. Back of her, resting heavily on his cane, stood a big, black-haired man.

"Come in, gentlemen," boomed this person in a heavy bass. "I'm Mrs. de Castro's brother—Jack Shuff."

Charley and Mr. Teeters walked in. It was not a large apartment, and it was rather shabby in its appointments; but they took small note of this.

"Glad to know you," said Charley, though with eyes single for the widow.

"Thanks," boomed the big man. "No need to ask your name, sir. Everybody in New York knows Mr. Charles Carter by sight; and Mr. Merci—er—Percival Teeters as well. I'm proud to see you in our little home."

He held out his hand, but it was only Mr. Teeters' that he shook. Charley's was otherwise engaged; something like a little warm, fluttering bird was nestling in it and giving him a strange sensation in the nape of his neck.

"So kind of you to come!" a soft voice murmured in his ear.

"Wish I'd never been away," said Charley genially. At which the beauteous bereaved one dropped her violet eyes.

"I've been scolding Inez," affirmed Mr. Shuff loudly, "for the way this meeting has been brought about. It's irregular. It's not——"

"Any way's a good way to meet a lady," cut in Charley stoutly.

"Eh?" The big man stared at him. "By Jove, that's neat! I quit. Let's sit down and get acquainted."

He set the example, and lowered himself into a chair with a grimace.

"Broken toe," he explained. "Kicked a man down the steps——"

"Jack!" His sister raised a protesting finger.

"Oh, to be sure," said Jack apologetically. "I anticipate."

He showed a set of strong white teeth in a grin at Mr. Teeters, who experienced a vague uneasiness and thought of his fawn-colored pants. Mr. Shuff looked big enough to kick a mule down the steps, if he were so minded.

"Does it hurt much?" asked Mr. Teeters. "Your toe, I mean," he supplemented hastily.

"It's mending," the gentleman assured him. "And on a pinch I could use the other. If that scoundrel——Inez, what's the use of beating around the bush? Tell them about it."

Inez, who was sitting on the sofa with Charley, hesitated, with a pretty frown wrinkling her white forehead. Then, with a gesture which might have been Spanish—or Danish, so far as Messrs. Carter and Teeters could have classed it—she broke forth into speech:

"Oh, if I were not convinced of your goodness, and that you are honorable, kindly gentlemen, I could never bring myself to appeal to you! It was desperation that impelled me to send you those cards—that drove me to your hotel this morning on the chance of meeting you. My brother could not go—as you see—and besides I wanted to judge for myself what you were like."

"Sorry we're not strong on looks," said Charley soberly. "Hearts are all right, though."

"Did I not say so, Jack?" The lady interrogated her brother exultantly.

"Yes, you did," admitted Jack. He showed his teeth and added, "She said—there's no harm in telling it—that if she had the pick of all New York she would choose you as the easiest—er—persons to approach with a delicate and difficult proposal."

"The most honest and reliable," stated the widow with emphasis and a rapier-like

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glance at her brother. "You see, Mr. Carter—Mr. Teeters—a man whom my husband trusted has proved a traitor, and is trying to rob me of what little I have. I—" she faltered pitifully—"I am in great trouble!"

Her emotions overcame her, and she buried her face in her hands. Charley turned pale. This exhibition of distress affected him.

"Shame!" he gulped. "I say, Mrs.——"

"Call her Inez," Mr. Shuff adjured him. "And me Jack. We are all friends. It was that —— scoundrel I broke my toe on, Charley—a week ago."

"Inez!" said Charley, his voice quivering on the word. "Inez! Oh, I say, you know—don't! Can't stand to see you like this."

He reached out diffidently and touched her arm. Mr. Teeters looked on and wiggled his mustache. He seemed to be under an uncanny spell of silence. Mr. Shuff displayed signs of impatience.

"Come, come, Inez!" he exclaimed. "Control yourself."

Inez let her hands fall, and her eyes sought Charley's. To his relief there were no traces of tears in them; rather they were brilliant with repressed feeling. She bent prettily toward him and asked:

"Have you looked up radium? I sent the cards to impress it on your attention. I hoped they would arouse your interest and make it easier for me to enlist your aid."

Charley manifested reluctance to answer this, and Mr. Teeters broke through his reticence to remark—

"We thought it was some kind of patent dope you took with a spoon."

Brother and sister exchanged glances.

"By Jove, you don't say!" was Mr. Shuff's smothered comment.

"It is the most precious metal known," said the lady, a little breathlessly, "and a wonderful curative agent. I don't suppose there's an ounce of it in all the laboratories of the world. If there is it is worth four million dollars. Just a single grain—so small that you can scarcely see it—is worth eight thousand six hundred dollars."

"Merry Moses!" twittered Mr. Teeters.

"Go on," said Charley quietly to the girl. "Where do I come in?"

This direct inquiry brought another lightning exchange of glances between Inez and her brother. He gave a barely perceptible nod, and she spoke up quickly.

"I want you, Charley—I may call you that?—I want you, Charley, my dear friend, to help me recover one gram of radium which is being kept from me unlawfully by the man I have mentioned. Will you do it?"

"Sure," said Charley. "Where is he?"

He got up with a business-like air that Mr. Link would have recognized.

"Oh, not in that way!" cried the widow. She caught his hand and pulled him down beside her.

"How?" demanded Charley.

"Not by force; not that. Jack tried it. We must use a different method."

SHE had, quite unthinkingly no doubt, retained her hold on him, letting their hands lie hidden between them on the sofa. Charley felt now a gentle pressure on his fingers, and his pulses leaped to it.

"You're the doctor," he declared. "Anything you say goes with me."

She cast a look of entreaty at Mr. Teeters. It gave him to understand that he was not neglected in her scheme of things, that he was essential to her plans. He puffed out his chest.

"I'm sitting in with Come-On," he protested. "Pat hand. What's a gram?"

"A gram," interjected Mr. Shuff, "is the equivalent of fifteen and a half grains. It's worth a hundred and thirty-three thousand dollars, spot cash."

"And who," questioned Mr. Teeters, "is this gay guy that's holding out on Inez?"

"A little runt named—er—Heck; Ed Heck," growled the big man. "Dirty scoundrel!"

"Wait!" begged Inez. "Let me explain. Percival—you don't object, do you?"

"I'd kill myself if I did," Mr. Teeters told her.

"Percival, this man Heck stole the radium from my husband, who was a Spanish nobleman and a great scientist—Don Emilio Alfonso de Castro. You may have heard of him. He died three months ago."

"I seen his name in the papers," lied Mr. Teeters readily.

Mr. Shuff regarded him attentively, but Mrs. de Castro beamed on him and said:

"Yes, his death was widely published. He was very much older than I. We—" Charley felt the slender fingers stir caressingly—"we were almost like father and

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daughter. The radium was his fortune—not much, but enough to have made me comfortable at the price it would bring. But Heck——"

She withdrew her hand from Charley's and flung her arms out wide to convey her sense of desolation.

"Here's the case in a nutshell, boys," said Mr. Shuff, with evident intolerance of his sister's way of doing business. "This beast Heck has the radium. It's in a glass tube no thicker than a pencil and not half as long. If we have him jugged we won't get the radium. He'll hide it. But on the other hand he can't sell it because it would make a stir—a gram of radium—and he'd have to tell where he got it. Understand?"

"Sure," said Charley.

"He came here the other day," continued Mr. Shuff, "and made us a proposition. I kicked him out of the house, and he sent word he'd give us just a week in which to meet his terms. If we didn't come to time he'd throw the radium in the river, and that would be the end of it. The week's up tomorrow, and we haven't got the money. He wants thirty thousand dollars, and we can't scrape up more than fifteen. We're up a stump."

Mr. Shuff wrapped himself in gloom and centered his gaze on his toe. The fair Inez sat in statuesque fixity, her hands clasped on her breast, her eyes on the floor. The Mater Dolorosa had nothing on her as a picture of sorrowing despair. Charley looked from one to the other and then at Mr. Teeters.

"He's no hick, this Heck," observed the secretary sagely. "He's a con man all right enough."

"Well, what's the answer, Percy?" Mr. Carter desired to know.

"You got to handle con men with their own mitts," returned Mr. Teeters. "Got to give 'em the double cross. This guy's trying to frisk our friends; all right, we got to frisk him. See?"

Charley waved his hand at Mr. Shuff.

"There you are, Jack. He's wise. Keeps his fingers crossed all the time."

"He's wonderful!" asserted Inez, coming suddenly to life. "What do you propose, Percival?"

"Put a cop in the closet, get Heck here, pinch him and take his gum away. It's easy—like eating eels."

Mr. Shuff laughed mirthlessly.

"You don't know Heck," he remarked. "He's a snake! If you step on him he'll bite you."

"On the toe?" quizzed Charley, grinning.

"Good, that!" said Mr. Shuff. "First rate! Ha, ha! But—" he became grave again—"this time he'll come with a strong-arm man, a gun-fighter. I know Heck. If we try any funny business, there'll be shooting, and somebody'll get hurt."

"Oh!" gasped Inez. "We can't have that. I would rather pay him what he asks and be rid of him. I'll still have over a hundred thousand dollars."

Mr. Shuff expressed astonishment at this.

"You're not going to give Charley anything for loaning you the fifteen? By Jove, Inez, you've got your nerve!"

The beautiful young woman's embarrassment was painful to witness.

"Why—certainly, Jack—anything he says—of course. Ten thousand—willingly."

"I guess not," said Charley. "Reward enough to help a lady. Glad to do it. Ask Percy."

He glanced over at Mr. Teeters a little anxiously; Percy was the watchdog of his treasury.

"Gollamighty, fifteen thousand bones!" barked the watch-dog, albeit somewhat feebly.

"You'll keep the radium in your possession, of course, till we sell it," Mr. Shuff informed him. "Pretty big security, eh—a hundred and thirty-three thousand dollars?"

Mr. Teeters' brow cleared.

"That's different," he conceded.

"And," concluded Mr. Shuff, "I insist on the ten thousand. It's only fair. Without you boys we lose the whole cheese. Ninety-three thousand for Inez is a lot better than nothing."

"Oh, yes, yes," approved his sister. "I couldn't think——"

"Don't think," smiled Charley at her. "Bad habit. Never do myself."

He produced a pocket checkbook, but Mr. Shuff motioned it away.

"CHECKS won't go with Heck, my dear boy. It's cold cash with him. You bring the fifteen thousand here tomorrow at eleven o'clock, and we'll have our fifteen ready. And keep this thing under your hat; Inez doesn't want it talked about. Bring a couple of taxis with you,

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and before we pay over the money we'll run down to Bellevue Hospital and have those doctor sharps pass on the radium. We've got to make sure Heck isn't running in a ringer on us. You two and Inez will go in one cab with the coin, and I'll go with Heck and the radium in the other. Get me?" He dipped his head knowingly at Charley.

"Sure," said Mr. Carter. "Good scheme. Won't take any chances."

Mr. Shuff stood up with much less effort than he had expended in sitting down.

"Jack! Your toe! Be careful!" His sister's voice rang out sharply.

"Ouch! Confound it, I forget the deuced thing!" was Mr. Shuff's immediate response. "Percy, give me a hand in the dining-room; that's a good fellow. There's a bottle in the cooler that's crying to be opened."

Mr. Teeters arose with alacrity.

"I'm the little joker that invented corkscrews," he avowed, and strutted off in the wake of the limping Mr. Shuff.

"Charley," whispered Inez, when they had gone, "Charley, are you really going to help me?"

"Surest thing you know!" said Charley. "Proud to do it."

She searched his face with her eyes, and he smiled into them with boyish ardor. There was a way, the lady knew, to place the matter beyond a doubt, and she adopted it. With a swift, birdlike movement she darted at his lips and touched them with her own. Then, springing up, she ran into the dining-room without a backward look, and Charley, dumb with the wonder of this rare experience, followed in a delicious daze.

## IV

TWO taxicabs waited before the Hotel Rirebien for Mr. Carter and his secretary. Pierre, the doorman, had called them a half an hour since, and their meters were buzzing merrily.

Mr. Link was the cause of the delay. He had come around to give the usual morning lesson in the manly art of self-defense, and had found his patron's thoughts engaged with foreign matters. In fact, Messrs. Carter and Teeters were just returned from the bank when Mr. Link, with the lack of ceremony which distinguishes the truly great, walked in on them unannounced. A pile of banknotes lay on the table.

"Lord love me!" exclaimed the athlete. "Are you going to start a faro bank or buck one?"

"Nothing doing with the gloves today, Joe," said Charley blandly. "Come around tomorrow."

He picked up the notes and transferred them to an inner pocket. It was his entire bank balance, and he had drawn it without a tremor.

"In thousands!" choked Mr. Link. "And there must be twenty of them!"

"Nothing doing today, Joe," repeated Charley. "Come along, Teet."

Mr. Link blocked the way to the door. His jaw was set.

"I'm on," he announced. "They hooked you, yesterday. You're going to put a bet down on that radium junk. Going to slip that bale of kale to the pretty lady with the bright blue eyes. Mother of mine! You ought to be in your little cribs, you two, with the bottle on the pillow."

"Where did you get that stuff?" inquired Mr. Teeters scornfully. "Not out of your own head?"

Mr. Link motioned him to silence as he would have a fretful child. He addressed himself to Charley in pleading tones.

"Look here, boss, I ought to call the cops. It ain't right to let you out lined with paychecks to feed that fairy with. By the Rock of Cashel, I'm minded to put you in the bath and soak your brains loose. They're all matted up."

Charley stepped over to the door of the adjoining room and locked it. He dropped the key in his pocket and returned to Mr. Link.

"Go on out, Teet," he said. "I'm going to stay here with Joe a while."

Mr. Link let Mr. Teeters pass. The secretary went into the hall, leaving the door ajar that he might at least have aural information of what happened within. Mr. Link was mystified and showed it.

"What's the idea?" he asked.

Charley waved him to a chair.

"Sit down," he invited pleasantly.

Mr. Link grunted, and walked over to the table. Charley in one bound made the door. The key, as he knew, was on the outside, as he had left it.

"See you later, Joe," he grinned. "Take a nap. I'll tell them at the office not to trouble you."

He slammed the door and locked it, and

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went off happily with the cackling Mr. Teeters, quite forgetful of the telephone at Mr. Link's command.

It was Mr. Shuff this time who opened to them at the flat in Forty-fifth Street. His toe seemed to have made a marvelous recovery overnight. He limped only when he thought of it.

"You're late," was his greeting. " 'Fraid something had happened to you." He saw Charley's eye searching the room. "Inez is dressing. She'll be in soon. Er—Heck, this is Mr. Carter and his secretary, Mr. Teeters."

. Mr. Heck, who was a little man with a crooked, left-sided mouth, jerked his chin by way of salutation, and introduced a burly individual standing near as "Mr. Watts."

Mr. Watts, apparently, was unused to good society. He simply scowled and stared.

"Let's get to cases," said Mr. Heck curtly. "I've no time to waste. Here's the radium; where's the cash?"

He tapped a yellow pigskin satchel on the table and looked at Mr. Shuff, who looked at Charley.

"Got yours?" he questioned. "I've got mine."

"Sure," said Charley. "Let's have a peek at the radium first."

"Yes," concurred Mr. Teeters. "We ain't buying a pig in a poke."

Mr. Watts glared at him and licked his lips suggestively, and Mr. Teeters shrank into the background. Mr. Heck did not seem to take the request amiss, however. He opened the bag and took from it a rosewood box. This he unlocked with a small brass key and lifted the lid. On a bed of cotton reposed a tube of colored glass.

"There you have it," proclaimed Mr. Heck. "Take it up, if you like, but I won't be responsible. That little tube is shooting out rays at the speed of one hundred and thirty thousand miles a second. It's the deadliest thing in New York if you don't know how to handle it."

Mr. Watts recoiled from the table with a frightened oath, and Mr. Teeters retreated to the window. On a pinch such a trifle as the sash would prove no obstacle to a leap for life.

"For Heaven's sake put the thing up, Heck," petitioned Mr. Shuff. "Here, count this money."

He threw a fat roll of yellow backs on the table under Charley's nose. Mr. Heck reached over and drew the banknotes to him. He ran through them with tender solicitude, and shoved the pile to one side.

"Fifteen thousand," he stated "Where's the rest?"

Charley laid before him his packet of bills, which Mr. Heck counted with even tenderer solicitude.

"Right!" he pronounced. "Who's going to carry this bundle?"

"Mr. Carter," spoke up Mr. Shuff promptly. "I'll get something to put it in."

He went into the next room and reappeared almost immediately with a satchel which was the counterpart of Mr. Heck's. Both were new, and of the same size and color.

"Funny," said Charley, pointing to them. Mr. Shuff voiced amazement.

"Well, by Jove! Heck, I bought mine at Black's this morning. Where did you get yours?"

"At Black's yesterday. Off the same shelf, it looks like."

"Well, well!" remarked Mr. Shuff as he gathered up the currency and dropped it in his bag. "It's funny, Heck, as my friend here says. Er—mightn't happen again in a hundred years." He turned the key in the lock and, withdrawing it, handed it to Charley. "Freeze on to that, old chap. When we get to Bellevue, if everything's all right we'll pay over the coin."

He placed the bag on the side of the table next to Charley. Mr. Heck with his bag was on the opposite side. And here Inez came in, her loveliness filling the room like a burst of incarnated melody.

"Are we ready?" She put the question to Charley, at the same time giving him a look that promised sweet rewards for his knightly succor.

"In a minute," said Charley, his eyes kindling. "Got a little business first."

He sat down at the table and took from his pocket a fountain pen and his checkbook. He tore out a blank check and wrote a few lines on the back of it. This procedure was so unexpected that the others could only gaze in surprise. Having finished, Charley read his production:

In exchange for thirty thousand dollars I promise to deliver to bearer one gram of genuine radium.

Mr. Carter pushed the paper and pen over to Mr. Heck.

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"Sign it," Charley requested the other.

There was a moment's silence. Then Inez spoke:

"He's right, Jack. Suppose this—this creature should try to raise his price at Bellevue? Don't you see?"

"Sign it, Heck," said Mr. Shuff sternly. "I wouldn't trust you with a pennyworth of rusty nails."

"Say, you! Can that line of chatter," snarled Mr. Watts.

THE widow tossed her head, but her brother muttered a word of apology and drew away from the man. Charley glanced up at him curiously, and then gave his attention to Mr. Heck. That gentleman, after a fleeting hesitation, smiled grimly and put his name to the paper. He passed it back with a repetition of the remark that he had no time to lose.

"You'll wait, sir," Inez told him acidly, "until I have conferred with Mr. Carter."

She beckoned Charley and Mr. Teeters into a corner and, somewhat superfluously it would appear, cautioned them against the desperado Watts. Sudden death walked with him, and violence was his handmaid.

Mr. Teeters grew white as he listened, but Charley rejoiced. This adorable solicitude for his safety excused the existence of Watts and all his tribe. Then, as it chanced, his eye strayed to a large framed print of Zatka's "Water Nymphs," which hung above the girl's head. The light so fell upon the glass that it mirrored a section of the room. Charley's lips tightened as he looked, but he stood perfectly still.

"Cut it short, Inez!" warned Mr. Shuff.

"Charley, get your bag," was the girl's rejoinder.

To reach the table Charley had to pass Mr. Watts. In doing so he brushed against him awkwardly. Mr. Watts turned on him with an oath.

"Don't," said Charley to him evenly. "Lady present."

He stopped short and faced the fellow. Mr. Teeters, just behind, also stopped. His mustache was wiggling.

"Why," bellowed the outraged Watts, "you little shrimp, I'll——"

Charley's fist shot up with a short-arm lift—one of Mr. Link's pet jolts. It caught the untamed daredevil on the point of his chin. He staggered back an impotent step or two, and fell to the floor like a butchered beef, his head in the dining-room. Mr. Teeters emitted a screech, and sprang forward. He towered over the inanimate Mr. Watts, a wavering pistol in his hand.

"Gun-fighter, is he?" he panted. "I'll show him! I'll fix his clock for him! I'll fill his works full of pills!"

Jack Shuff and his sister, and Mr. Heck, rushed to the rescue of Mr. Watts. Charley stood where he was, by the table.

"You fool!" hissed Mr. Shuff at the hysterical secretary. "Do you want to bring the bulls in on us?"

"Come here, Percy," commanded Charley. "Let him sleep."

Mr. Heck swung around savagely.

"You've killed him!" he yapped, searching for signs of fright at the announcement.

"Good job," said Charley coolly. "Do you want to take the corpse with you or leave it here? I'm going." He picked up his bag, and nodded to Inez. "Ready?" he asked.

A quick interrogation passed from the young woman's eyes to her brother's.

"Go on, you three," directed Mr. Shuff sharply. "We'll follow. If Watts finds Charley here when he comes to there'll be the devil to pay. Go on."

The widow, whose emotions seemed well-nigh choking her, summoned up a wan smile for Mr. Carter, and led the way to the street.

The taxicab headed east for First Avenue, down which the run would be straightway to Bellevue Hospital. They had crossed Sixth Avenue when another taxi wheeled by. In it sat Mr. Link. The pugilist, after a strenuous telephonic argument, had convinced the office at the Rirebien that his liberty was not a thing to be trifled with, and a boy was sent up to free him.

As their cabs passed, mutual recognition also passed between Mr. Link and Mr. Teeters. Mr. Link shouted at his driver. Mr. Teeters yelped at Charley:

"Joe's loose! Just seen him—on wheels."

Charley grinned.

"Let out a link," he urged the man in front.

"Joe! Who is Joe?" demanded Inez in a flutter.

"Friend," said Charley. "Good old sport. Thought this radium business bunk, and tried to stop me. Joke!"

He laughed. Mr. Teeters, who was looking back, called out—

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"He's following us, Come-On!" They were up now with the Grand Central Station.

"Stop!" shrilled Mrs. de Castro at the driver. "Stop! Stop! I must use the telephone."

The taxi came to a stand. The lady, who for some reason appeared to be quite beside herself, tugged at the door and pushed it open. Charley caught at her arm.

"By George!" he cried. "I say, Inez——"

"Let me go!" she snapped at him. "I haven't a minute to lose. Wait for me."

She leaped out, and scurried down Park Avenue toward the depot. Mr. Teeters goggled after her, and remarked—

"Gollamighty, Come-On, there's something wrong!"

"Here's Joe," said Charley.

Mr. Link burst from his cab, clamoring wildly.

"You let the dame get away!"

"She's gone to telephone," Mr. Teeters informed him—very mildly, however.

Mr. Link laughed raucously.

"Of course! You bet she has. Holy snakes; what a pair of suckers!"

"Hop in, Joe," Charley bade him. "You've got a fever. Nothing to get excited over."

"Nothing?" yelled Mr. Link, thrusting his generous person into the vehicle. "You're right! It's just what you've got in that grip—nothing! Nothing but 'radium.' They've got the coin. It's the old two-bag trick they played on you. Oh, my Lord!"

"Maybe not," said Charley calmly. "Take a peek inside, Joe."

He unlocked the satchel. Mr. Link took a look and made a gurgling sound.

"Money!"

"Thirty thousand," said Charley. "They switched bags on me. Saw it, and switched 'em back—when I floored that imitation White Hope, Percy. But I didn't think Inez——" He stopped abruptly.

"Merry Moses!" ejaculated Mr. Teeters, and lapsed into soundless self-communion.

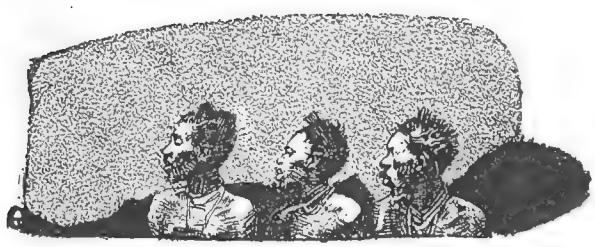
"Guess I'll have to keep this money, Joe, till they bring around the radium," observed Charley soberly. "Here's a paper one of them signed."

He held out the agreement with Mr. Heck. The strong man read it slowly, and breathing hard. When at last he returned it he grunted out—

"By all the saints, it's me the merry ha-ha's on—not you!"

"Sure," said Charley.

**The next adventure of *Come-On Charley* will appear complete in the September issue.**



# "THE TRUTH-MACHINE"

*by*

**W. Robert Foran**

THOUGH the Banyoro of Africa are brave, they are inveterate thieves, and very subtle in their methods of carrying out their thefts and concealing their guilt by craft. Their favorite motto is, "Keep a grave face even though you laugh behind your hand."

On one occasion a Banyoro stole two cows from a missionary. He was charged with the offense, but stedfastly denied it. He even went so far as to offer to undergo their favorite ordeal by poison, but the missionary was just as crafty. He had in his possession a small electric battery and told the culprit that if he had stolen the two cows it would be impossible for him to hold the handles of the battery.

After the man had allowed himself to be twisted into painful contortions, he could stand it no longer and confessed. A little later, when he had brought back the stolen cows, he asked if he could borrow the "machine which makes men tell the truth," for if he could apply this test to his brothers he thought he could find a lot more stolen cows.

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# BUG COLE *and the* TRIPLE SQUEEZE

*by* Wm B. Hanna

COLE'S nickname was not at all significant of his nature or disposition. He was neither eccentric nor irresponsible; he was in fact a self-reliant and clear-headed youth. True, when he was making the famous run which snatched victory in the eleventh inning and clinched the league pennant for the Knickerbockers, the thirty-five thousand fans thought for the moment he was crazy, more especially as he was only a substitute put in by Manager McLaw in a desperate pinch.

The genesis of the pseudonym was one wholly of "Bug's" multiple initials. Burton Ullman Gray Cole was his full name, curtailed by his college mates to a concise if not appropriate "Bug."

"Get this fellow, Mac," was the strong recommendation, after a careful study of the college player, of Arthur Kirwin, the scout. "Get him before somebody else grabs him, for he's a better prospect than anything I've seen around the bushes in five years."

"I've heard that from you before, Jim," replied McLaw in his crisp, incisive way. "You say he has a great arm. That's what a catcher ought to have, but has he got brains? Brains—that's what I want. I've been managing now for ten years, and in all that time the average of players breaking in who can think out anything for themselves occasionally or who don't have to be told what to do all the time is about one in fifty. And the average isn't increased any by the college players.

"I'd give one thousand dollars right now for a ball-player with real initiative. We'd just about win the pennant again this year if we had another one."

"Well, you know the Bulldogs open the home exhibition season with us again this Spring," said Kirwin, "and you can look him over for yourself. This is his last year in college. He hit .324 for twenty games against the high-brow pitchers last year, and that's pretty nifty sloughing in any company. He's as fast on the bases as anybody on your team, and you know you're strong for speed. This bird can scorch the paths, and he's a left-handed batter. Besides, you can use another catcher."

McLaw often declared that if he could do his own scouting, money and trouble would be saved by the simple procedure of leaving much of the minor-league talent which was picked up severely alone. He valued his own judgment of raw material above anybody else's, and not without reason. His managerial worth had been proved.

One world's championship and three pennants don't come to one team unless the man at the helm is a wise and able commander, wise and able both in digging up and developing men as well as in field generalship. "The trouble is," said McLaw, speaking of the alfalfa crop, "that the players often sent up for trial are either hopelessly minor league or else are picked before they are ripe."

It spoke well, then, for Cole's baseball



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potentiality that, after looking him over at the New York grounds that day in April, McLaw talked business with him. The collegian's build attracted the manager. He was a sturdily and trimly set-up youth, five feet eleven, and weighing about one hundred and seventy-five pounds—a natural hitter, the manager observed, who also could run and throw. But it was more than physical recommendations which the young catcher unknowingly displayed to the sharp-eyed big-league boss.

In the sixth inning of the game between the Knicks and the Bulldogs, Boyle of the big leaguers was on first and Heinie Gross, a substitute, on third—both fast men on the boulevards. Boyle bluffed to go to second. No sooner had he done this than Cole flashed a sign to his second baseman—an all but imperceptible signal, but one which the keenly observant McLaw, coaching at first, knew had passed; for he saw the Bulldog second baseman creep in.

McLaw was interested. It didn't matter much whether the Knicks scored again or not—they had runs enough; and he was studying the college catcher. McLaw had intended signing for the double steal on the next pitched ball, but he changed his mind. He wanted to see what Cole would do, and he adopted the Fabian tactics of waiting.

Cole called for a pitch-out. Boyle, on first, smiled derisively.

"Thought I was going down, didn't you?" he cried; and he laughed loudly, as did the spectators, when Cole, for no apparent reason, and seemingly rattled, threw violently down to second. The hilarity of the spectators, ardent worshipers all of the Knickerbockers, increased when Gross, on third, broke for the plate the instant Cole launched his throw.

Just a foolish, hare-brained college play, the knowing fans told themselves; and Gross, dashing in, was about to show the collegians up. A moment later, and the shoe was on the other foot. Hardly taking time to catch Cole's throw, Keenan, the Bulldog second baseman, flipped the ball back; and Gross, to his intense chagrin, was out a yard at home.

"What d'ye think of that!" crabbed Gross on the bench to the manager. "He makes a bone and gets away with it."

"Bone, ——!" retorted McLaw in his pungent style. "He had that play figured out and played you for the *lignum vitae* dome, which you had."

THAT play was one of the reasons why McLaw talked business with Cole.

"I'll give you a contract for three thousand dollars a year for three years if you'll sign," said the manager.

"Not for me, Mac," replied Cole, who had business as well as baseball sense, and unbounded faith in himself. "But I'll tell you what I'll do. If you'll pay me at the rate of three thousand dollars for the first year I'll promise to sign as soon as the college year is over, provided you'll give me four thousand dollars next year if I make good. My folks are poor people; I'm working my way through college; and there's another reason why I want to make all I can. That reason is a girl."

Then he added:

"The Bruins have offered me thirty-five hundred dollars a year, but I'd rather play in New York." Which latter observation was another evidence of Cole's intelligence.

"All right," replied Mac, who always went straight and quickly to the point. "When can you report?"

"The first of July."

The Bulldogs won the college championship; Cole took his B. A., and between graduation and the first of July he put in a week at the home of his parents in Circleton, Ohio. Filial affection—and it was not slight with Cole—did not hold him to the small Ohio town as closely as affection of another kind. There was a more potent attraction there. He and Lucy Speer had been engaged since his junior year. It was less their own idea than that of Lucy's father that no date be fixed for a wedding until Cole should be earning enough for two to live on comfortably. Both thought four thousand dollars a year would be sufficient.

The future Mrs. Cole was not that type of a female fan who could sit in the grandstand reading a novel while her husband was playing on the field below. She didn't know much about the game, but she purposed acquiring as much knowledge of it as it was possible for the layman, or laywoman, to acquire. In the week that Cole was home she and he often talked baseball. She wanted to learn for his sake, and she was an apt pupil under his tutorship.

It was during one of these talks that there

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was created in the active brain of the young catcher the germ of thought which alternately lay dormant and grew until it burst forth some months later a sensational, vivid reality and created a furore. An innocent question or two, an association of ideas, and the sudden flash of a daring and original concept, never relinquished, but stored away until that epochal October day when its application made the name of Cole illustrious among the national game's elect.

"Burton," queried Lucy the day before he left to join the Knickerbockers, "were you ever in a triple play?"

"No, but we would have made one in the second game with the Leopards if Corning at short hadn't dro_ _ed my throw."

"Burton, what is a squeeze?"

Burton explained.

"Man on third; starts in with pitcher's swing; batter bunts. Base-runner has such a start that is it impossible to throw him out at the plate; batter out at first, but run scores. Play used when one run is needed, not more than one out; if two out, the run wouldn't count if the batter should be thrown out at first base. That," he added, "is one kind of squeeze. I'll show you another."

"Never mind that now," severely. "I'm trying to learn baseball."

"We made a double squeeze once. Beat a professional team with it on the Easter trip in Norfolk last year. Cash was on third and I was on second, with Riley at the bat. We had talked over the play and resolved to try it. Riley gave the sign and I had such a big start that I was near third when he bunted. Before they could fire the ball to first and back to the plate I scored."

"That was fine. I suppose that if there are triple plays there are triple squeezes. I hope you make lots of triple plays and squeezes in the big league."

Cole laughed.

"A triple play, maybe, but hardly a triple——"

He broke off abruptly.

"By the gods!" he added, as if thinking aloud. "I might be able to get away with it some time. I wonder if Mac'd stand for it. He would if it went through. He says he wants men with initiative. That'd be initiative sure enough."

Lucy brought him back to earth.

"What in the world are you muttering about?" Again Cole laughed. "Oh, nothing, I guess, little girl; but maybe you builded better than you knew when you expressed that hope. Some day, maybe, we shall see what we shall see."

Cole reported to the Knickerbockers in Cincinnati. Any hope he had of becoming a regular right away was short-lived. Sachem Byers, the first-string catcher, was going in top form, which meant he was the best backstop in the league. Any man who can bat .340 and stand up to the work every day is too valuable to step aside for a college recruit—certainly while the pennant is not yet assured.

Furthermore, McLaw had his own way with youngsters. Their actual work was confined to morning practise, an occasional exhibition game and warming up before regular battles. While the game was on they were busily engaged in wearing a hole in the bench and listening to such comment, commendatory or caustic, as the manager and regulars let drop in the course of the heat of conflict. They chafed under the idleness, but all the time they were assimilating baseball, learning and expanding by observation and what actual work they had, and all the time the Argus-eyed manager was noting their bearing and progress during their apprenticeship.

"I'll find use for you in due time," he told Cole. "Meanwhile just sit there on the bench where you'll be learning every day."

THE Knicks were on their first trip west. From Cincinnati they went to St. Louis, and it was there that Cole got into his first big-league game. Monihan, of the catching staff, did the backstopping what infrequent times Sachem Byers didn't "work," or stepped aside, which was not infrequent, to make way for a faster base-runner. The Sachem could hit like a pile-driver; but also he ran like one.

The Knicks and Scarlets were tied in the eighth inning—score naught to naught. The pitching was twenty-four karats fine, the fielding air-tight. One run would take on the proportions of a Colossus. The Sachem led off in the eighth. This was one time when there would be no reason to pass that formidable artisan of the pestle. The Sachem's groove was anything over the plate between knee and neck. He hadn't made a hit that day, but, being the bearer

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of an average which represented a hit once in every three times up, mathematically he was due.

Harkness, in the box for the Scarlets, tried to work the Sachem, but the latter's title wasn't meaningless. He was wily, and the count went to three and one. The next ball was over, and the Sachem laced it to left center. A fast man would have made two bases on the hit. Hardly had the Sachem crossed the bag than McLaw turned to the bench.

"Cole," he sang out in sharp command, "get out here and run for Byers!"

Cole stripped off his sweater. On his way to the base, McLaw halted him. "I want you in there for your speed," he whispered. "We need this run. Be careful not to be caught napping. I'm going to have Marty—" short for Marston, the star pitcher— "sacrifice. Be on your toes to avoid a force."

There never was any ambiguity in McLaw's instructions. Always they were unmistakably clear. Another virtue of this master mind was that he used a minimum of slang—only such expressive colloquialisms as were necessary, and terminology more technical than colloquial. Such abominations as pill for ball, hurler for pitcher, peg for throw, he never stooped to. McLaw, in addition, gave his orders as one who had confidence in the ability of the recipient to carry them out. He radiated confidence; that's one reason why he got so much out of his men.

Marty bunted slowly toward third. Away dashed Cole. He saw immediately that there was no chance to force him at second. The bunt was so close to the foul line that Morley, third baseman of the Scarlets, would do well to throw out the batter. Cole's speed was an unknown factor to the Scarlets, and it didn't enter their heads that he'd try to go any farther than second. His rapid-fire mind, third being thoughtlessly uncovered by the Scarlet shortstop, told him to go on.

"It's worth the chance," he reasoned, and around second base he raced. Kallacky, the first baseman, threw over as soon as the negligent Houseman woke up and ran to cover third, but Cole arrived there with him and was safe. He scored on a sacrifice fly, the only run of the game.

This performance pleased McLaw greatly. "I think he's there," he remarked to Marty after the game, and that mound luminary nodded in combination.

Another occasion on which the Bug strengthened the growing good opinion McLaw had of him, took place back on Cogan's Oval, the home ground of the Knicks in Harlem. With a visiting player on third, one on first, and one out, Mickey Doran fouled high toward the stand. Byers had been excused, as the Knicks were six runs ahead; and Cole was catching. He took the foul after a run and the man on first dug out for second, trying to draw a throw. So realistic was Cole's bluff throw that Carver, on third, bit hook, line and sinker, and came piling for the plate. Wise Hooks Wilton, in the box for the Knicks, ran in and covered the plate; and on Cole's throw the heavy-footed Carver was doubled at the terminal.

Carver was out clearly enough, but, by way of an alibi to cover his own lack-wit play in being tricked by what he referred to as a "fresh college guy," he raged at the umpire. "From the sheepskin to the horsehide, eh?" gibed McLaw, repeating Carver's own contemptuous reference to Cole. "Say, Carver, you'll soon be lucky to be playing in the night-school league."

Cole made his share of mistakes—"booted" one now and then—but didn't make the same mistake twice. McLaw put him in as frequently during the Summer as the occasion would allow—that is, when the Knicks had a big lead and the Sachem could be taken out. He was green and amateurish for a while in touching a runner at the plate, but less so as he acquired experience. It was evident that he had a good head and was nervy, and that what rawness he had was more manual than mental.

Cole would have been used oftener behind the bat, but it was no year to give much time to developing youngsters. It turned out to be a grueling, anxious season for the Knicks all through the latter half of it. Slight favorites for the pennant and slightly ahead, they couldn't afford to lose ground, for the Buccaneers were pressing them hard. The staying qualities of both teams were taxed to the utmost.

As a matter of fact, the intrinsic ability of the Buccaneers was greater than that of the Knicks, but the former didn't know it —else they would have been more dangerous; and the Knickerbockers, through prestige and the masterly way in which McLaw

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manipulated and conserved the strength of his pitching staff, were able to hang on to their tenuous lead.

The last three weeks were surcharged with excitement and uncertainty. Both teams felt the strain and were near the cracking point. Cole never before had realized that baseball could be such a nerve-racking pursuit. He was in it neck and crop by now, and, as with his club associates, it didn't seem that there was anything else in the world that counted.

Back in that small Ohio town the excitement was quite as acute. The pennant race for the time being was the main theme of Cole's letters and the personal interest in the Knicks in Circleton was as great, *per capita*, as it was in New York. The whole country, for that matter, had become absorbed in the momentous question: Would the Knicks or the Buccaneers win the league pennant and meet the Mackerels of Philadelphia in the world's series? Yet the world's series temporarily was a matter of secondary interest. Time enough for that when the league race was decided.

Beyond catching in half a dozen games, Cole's activities with the Knickerbockers were limited to going in as a pinch hitter a couple of times and as a pinch base-runner more frequently. He understudied Byers as a base-runner so often that he was referred to as the Sachem's courier, a duty which he filled capably. As a base-runner he had speed and judgment and had shown aptitude at mastering the intricacies of the fall-away slide. He was nimble and slippery and took readily to that sinuous method of eluding a baseman. For a first-year substitute he was used oftener than was McLaw's custom with fledglings. He was deep in the spirit of the strife as the race neared its eventful finish.

It wasn't until the final series of the year that the great issue was decided. The Buccaneers were scheduled to play their last three games of the season in New York. The schedule-makers, perchance, had hit it off as if with prophetic vision toward dramatic effect. The two teams turned into that final three-game stretch with both under a furious drive.

The Knicks were two full games ahead, but the Buccaneers won the first game of the series, and that left the Knicks only one game ahead. By winning the next two games the Buccaneers would win the pennant. One game of the remaining two meant the championship for the Knicks. With them there was more to lose than with their rivals. Two-time champions already and favorites all season for a third, defeat meant more to them than to the Buccaneers. They were carrying added weight. Sometimes it's a big handicap to be a favorite. If there is a fall it's all the harder.

The second game was booked for Friday. Now New York, when the occasion is big enough, can turn out as huge crowds on one day as on another. It doesn't have to be a Saturday. All days are alike in the metropolis when the game is an important one. The vast bowl was due to be packed that afternoon, and again the next afternoon if the Buccaneers won the second game. The city was in the throes of its annual baseball madness, and the rest of the country was in the same state of virulent excitement. It was the closest finish in years. Not for a decade had knowledge of the ultimate destination of the pennant been so long deferred. In addition, the world's series was to begin the following Tuesday, adding fuel to the emotional fire.

THERE were twenty-five thousand persons on hand when the preliminary practise was begun and ten thousand more at game time. The press stand was a hive of humming industry. Scribes from Canada and Cuba and as far west as Denver, who were coming on for the world's series, killed two birds with one stone by hurrying on ahead for the league climax. The air was electric with expectancy. Ringed around the arena was a solid circle of humanity. The Mayor and United States Army officer commanding the Department of the East walked across the field while the crowd cheered lustily; paused to shake hands with McLaw and one or two of the players near the bench, and took their places in a box just behind the New York bench.

The practise was over. McLaw and Weston, the Buccaneer manager, handed in their batting orders to the umpire at the plate and conferred on ground rules.

"Ladies and gentlemen," bawled the umpire, "for the Buccaneers, Addison pitches and Gibbs catches; for New York, Marston pitches and Byers catches."

Everybody having eyes to see, while they

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were warming up, knew that Addison and Marston would pitch; but the announcement of Marston's name was greeted with a volcanic roar. There always was a roar when Marty was proclaimed to pitch.

Cole, on the bench, shivered slightly as Marty walked calmly to the box—Marty, to whom such scenes were an old story, whose nerve was granite, whose poise was never disturbed. Cole recalled the tense hush which enveloped him and the other players just before the kickoff in the Stadium in the big football game the previous November, and what a relief it was when the ball was driven high through the air and action began. So now came an agreeable relaxation with the first ball pitched.

"'He also serves who only stands and waits' is all right as far as it goes," he confided to a fellow bench-warmer, "but he also plays the hardest part." To which the stolid substitute addressed responded somewhat irrelevantly: "We'll get 'em. We'll knock that Babe Addison off the peak today. We got his number."

A mistaken prophecy. The Babe had that baffling drop of his operating from the start. He had smoke on his fast ball, a change of pace; and it was a duel of master craftsmen between him and Marston from the outset.

For eight innings of that historic game it looked as if the splendid pitching of Marston would be in a lost cause. "Give Marty a two-run lead, and the game's his," was an axiom, but this time the Knicks never provided that lead. Addison held them in the hollow of his hand—and he had a capacious hand. The game began inauspiciously for the Knicks, though if there hadn't been a slump in their batting for the last six weeks the one run pruned by the Buccaneers in the first inning would not have worried them in the least. But for half of the season, at least, two of the most dependable batters on the team—Harry Boyle, the second baseman, and Josh McCann, the first baseman—had been floundering around in the .250 class.

Fillmore, the Buccaneer second baseman, led off in the first inning with a base hit—a chop single down the third-base line. Carney, the right fielder, whose real name was Carnarvius and who found ball-playing more profitable than digging in Pennsylvania coal mines, bunted; but Byers scooped the ball in front of the plate and retired Fillmore at second with a perfect throw to Kid Elberson, the shortstop. Banks, the telescopic first baseman, was thrown out at first by Boyle, putting Carney on second; and when Volkmann, broad-shouldered, bandy-legged and the best shortstop in the game, stabbed sharply to Hartshorn at third, the latter made an over-throw to first on which Carney flitted over the plate.

The Buccaneers tallied again in the fifth. Atzman, the left fielder, whanged harshly to right for two bases; Lanahan, the center fielder, sacrificed; and though Elberson knocked down Gibbs' caroming punch, the best he could do was to throw the batter out at first, Atzman scoring. Two to naught in favor of the Buccaneers.

"Pretty lucky," growled the fans. "Only two hits off Marty so far, and two runs from them."

The Knicks, however, were a fighting team. They reflected the indomitable spirit of their leader, and they had come from behind too often for the throng to be discouraged. The sixth and seventh innings passed without further scoring. The two hostile runs grew ominously large. Seven large, forbidding horse-collars stared the Knicks in the face. Thirty thousand fans had risen and stretched in vain at the beginning of the seventh. That ancient rite was as futile in finding the weakness in the Addison armor as were the war clubs of the Knickerbockers.

Then came the eighth. The Knicks had made two singles off Addison in the first, but the second man up had pumped fatuously into a double play, and the following hit was wasted. From that inning to the eighth the Knicks scarcely could nick the ball for a foul off the ultra-smooth service of the saturnine Addison; and, save for a base on balls to Devoe in the second and a fumble by Berryman in the fourth, no Knickerbocker had been able, in that sterile period, to pitch camp at first base.

With the last half of the eighth McLaw stepped out to the coaching-line at first base as briskly as in the first inning. He took his usual stooping posture, watching intently the opposing pitcher and swinging a glance toward the batter as the ball sped up to the plate. Cole had been sent to third base to coach, and the assignment was a welcome break in seven innings of idleness on the bench. Grasty, center fielder and lead-off man in the batting order, was up.

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A good waiter was Grasty. He had the best eye for a pitched ball in the league. "Wait it out," were McLaw's wirelessed orders from the line. The scheme was successful. Addison, trying to work the batter, wavered a trifle and Grasty walked. It was the most fortuitous beginning of an inning for the Knickerbockers since the first of the game.

Before the end of the short, sharp rally into which the home team then was galvanized, two runs crossed the plate and the score was tied. Grasty stole second. Elberson made an infield hit and put him on third. Berryman's demise, third to first, put Elberson on second, Grasty playing it safe and holding third. Boyle, as a good fourth-place hitter should do, hit safely. He spilled a short hit into right, and Grasty and the Kid flocked home.

Cole played his little part in the uprising. It was he who, with quick and discriminating judgment, sent Elberson home from second. Boyle's hit to right permitted of a throw home which had a good chance of retiring Elberson. A more conservative coacher would have held the Kid on third. Not so Cole. In the McLaw school of taking chances he was an apt and convinced pupil, and he knew that just at that moment it was good baseball to take what was at least an even chance.

"Hold the bag! Don't send him in, you sap-head!" an alarmed fan had shouted as Elberson circled the corner; but the cry was drowned in the turbulent din which greeted the two tallies. The Knicks weren't able to score again, but the joyous racket had not died out when Cole walked to the bench at the end of the inning. It was all too confused for him to hear anything specific except the agitated warning of the one impulsive fan. In the blur of noise and turmoil that cry had reached his ears distinctly, and he laughingly told himself that he'd show that fan that he was no sap-head.

The fight was by no means over. Grimly the battling forces buckled down to business again. After the one relapse Addison regirded his loins and resumed the burden, stout of heart as ever. It was a gladiatorial pair that he and Marston made on the pinnacle, and throughout the next two innings they were the dominant factors. They were the rocks on which the attacking craft recoiled and broke. The ninth and tenth were scoreless.

THE eleventh was a maelstrom—frenzy in the stands, epic conflict on the field—from abysmal gloom to the highest realms of exultation. The Buccaneers made two runs in their half.

Gibbs led off and was hit by a pitched ball. The rooters groaned and swore.

"First time in two years Marty has done that," they declared.

McLaw protested.

"He didn't try to get out of the way, Mr. Umpire!" he contended vehemently. The umpire paid no attention. Gibbs took his base. McLaw still fumed.

"Make 'em play ball, umpire!" This from the Buccaneers' manager, Weston, coaching at third base. "They're only stalling."

"That'll do for you," warned the umpire. "I'll run this."

Addison, trying to sacrifice, drew two strikes. Then, from a blind swing at a ball Marty was wasting on him, a fluke single flew off his bat, Gibbs lumbering to second. Addison, grinning, took his position on first; Weston, at third, did a few delighted dervish steps.

"We've got 'em now," he yelled, "and we'll beat 'em again tomorrow!" The pennant loomed large before Weston.

"Yes, you will—not!" retorted the belligerent Hartshorn from his third-base perch. "The only thing you've got is a lot of rabbits' feet." Then to Marty and the Sachem: "Keep a-hustlin'! They can't score!"

The rooters shifted uneasily in their seats. The knockers, anticipating defeat with the relish of a buzzard sniffing a feast, chortled loudly. Momentarily the attention of the scribes was diverted while a policeman prevented a fight between one of these croaking worthies and a loyalist.

On a well executed hit-and-run play Fillmore slapped a single through to right as Boyle went over to cover second. Gibbs pounded home and Addison went to third. He reached there by hard running.

"Anyway, that run around the bases won't do him any good," philosophized McLaw on the bench. Carney was cut down on strikes; but on a double steal Boyle, while running down Fillmore, delayed his throw home too long, then threw wide and Addison scored. Fillmore, seeking to press an advantage, tried to take third and was thrown out; and Banks popped to McCann.

"They were two runs ahead in the eighth,



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boys; remember that!" were McLaw's encouraging words to his men as they came in to the bench—soberly, but with heads erect. "We ought to get Addison again right here. His run around the bases won't help him any. Go right at him when he puts it over."

The Buccaneers trudged slowly to the field. They were giving all the time they could to Addison to freshen up. Dejected fans were making for the exits. The game was gone. The Knicks couldn't overcome that two-run lead in the half inning remaining to them; Marty wouldn't be able to pitch again tomorrow, and he was the Knicks' best pitcher. A sorrowful outlook, indeed.

But such is the mercurial way of fans that when little Devoe, right fielder, opened the Knickerbockers' half of the eleventh with a hit over short of Texas-League trajectory and streaked to second before the left fielder could come in, their despondency was shed on the instant, and they once more were in a ferment of rooting.

McCann was up next, and when he did hit he hit them far. He bored the background with a whistling liner, and Devoe, who ran bases with less restraint than lack of perspicacity, made tracks for third. He didn't stop to reason that if the drive went safe he could score from second anyway, or that if Carney, a fancy fielder, made the catch, he (Devoe) risked being doubled off second. Devoe was a prominent member of the Order of the Concrete Cranium.

Carney ran out with McCann's ferocious drive, leaped and shot his bare hand overhead, was turned half-way around by the momentum when the ball struck, but—anguish in the stands—held it! Devoe scurried back to second in response to the frantic pleadings of the crowd.

There was only one out and still a fighting chance. Hartshorn, a crafty man at the plate, followed. Choking his bat, he bent well over. Anything to get on—hit by pitched ball, a walk, anything. Addison by this time was fully back into the swing of his effective pitching. His control was flawless, his curve was breaking to command, and his fast one was ripping into Gibbs's huge mitt.

Hartshorn poked at one of the fast ones and chopped it to the infield—a slow, teasing bounder, the meanest of balls to field; and Peters, the Buccaneers' third baseman, came charging in. He fumbled, recovered and threw to first, but too late to beat the flying Hartshorn. Devoe went to third.

Sachem Byers was up next. The Indian was McLaw's most dangerous hitter. Generally, when dangerous, he was passed, but to do so now would fill the bases with one out, a situation the Buccaneers didn't care to create. Weston motioned his outfielders to play deep. They might gather a long fly from the Sachem and allow Devoe to score —there'd be two out and only one run in —or they might head off a hit and hold Hartshorn at second or third. It would be time enough then to depend on a double play.

Just here McLaw set in motion one of those strategic series of plays which made him the great manager he was, showing his endless resourcefulness, his incomparable guile at taking an opposing team by surprise. The Buccaneer infield was playing back for one of the Sachem's hard smashes. McLaw's hand fumbled with his belt. Byers, apparently, never took his eye off the pitcher, but out of the corner of it he read the sign. Bunt, it ordered.

The masklike face of the Sachem concealed his own surprise. He, a slow runner, bunt? All right; orders were orders. His not to reason why. Trying to keep the ball low on Byers, who could kill a high one, Addison put one across the waistline—an ideal ball to bunt, but he wasn't looking for anything of that kind.

Peters, the Buccaneer third baseman, noting that Devoe wasn't coming in from third, came in on the jump the moment the ball trickled away from Byers's bat. The third baseman had too far to come to have any chance of throwing out Byers, and Devoe offered the better chance for a put-out if he tried for the plate. Byers thundered over first in safety, and the bases were filled with one out.

McLaw whirled to the bench.

"I want you, Cole! Run for Byers!"

With the stands shaking and the air quivering with the tumult, Cole ran to the bag and relieved Byers. The Sachem, his day's work done, walked leisurely to the dugout.

Marty was the next batter; and everybody expected McLaw would put in Handsome Hal McCutcheon, the pinch hitter. The sagacious McLaw, however, had other plans. He was fully aware that Addison was still a potent factor in the box. The

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Knicks had filled the bases, but not through clean hitting.

Addison was doing his part for the Buccaneers in fine style. McCann's was the only hard-hit ball of the inning. The odds were against a base hit, and on a grounder the chances were good for a throttling double play. Besides, the light was fading —a condition helpful for a pitcher.

McLaw had determined to try the double squeeze. This was a play never before attempted by the Knicks, though they had employed the single squeeze on just two occasions. The double squeeze they had discussed and planned for as a possible extreme measure in the coming world's series. But here, McLaw saw, as he shrewdly sized up the situation, was a moment just about ripe for its use. The future could take care of itself.

THE crowd had not ceased conjecturing on why McLaw had let Marty stay in.

"I suppose he wants him to win his own game with a hit," was the far-fetched explanation of a man to his neighbor.

Addison, confident of his own control and reckoning Marty as a comparatively easy victim, had tried to make him go after bad ones; and the count had reached three balls and one strike. It was just at this juncture that McLaw flashed his signal for the squeeze to be tried. If the next pitch was a ball, Devoe would be in anyway and the bases still filled, with one out.

If Marty laid down a bunt, a trick at which he was by no means unskilled, then the double squeeze might go through; if he missed and it was a second strike Devoe would be out at the plate, there would be men on second and third with two out and McCutcheon then could be substituted for Marty in the hope of making a base hit and bringing in two runners for a tied score. Also if Hartshorn, from second, should be caught at the plate trying the double squeeze, there would be two on bases with two out. All this McLaw thought out with the swiftness characteristic of his methods. With him, to think was the act.

Meanwhile Cole, at first, did some rapid thinking of his own, the moment the manager signed for the double squeeze.

"Gad, but I'd like to bring in the winning run right here," he told himself. The Buccaneers' infielders, all in the dark as to what McLaw had planned and unmindful whether or not Devoe scored if they could retire the batter or put through a double play, had not moved in. Their attention was concentrated on the batter; and as there was no likelihood whatever of any stealing being tried, the basemen were playing back from their posts while Addison was taking his full swing.

"Wouldn't it please Lucy and the folks!" continued Cole's thoughts — which, however, were not so far away that he didn't edge off the bag and take as much ground as did the Buccaneer first baseman. He knew that he would have a good lead when Addison did start his motion.

Then, evanescent, from the storehouse of memory came fleeting recollection of his baseball talk with Lucy. Instantaneously one thought begot another—squeeze, double squeeze, triple——

"By all that's holy, if things break for me at all I'll try it!"

It was a much discussed question among the Knickerbockers which was the faster—Cole or Devoe. They had met in impromptu sprints, but not formally. Cole got away and moved like a sprinter. "Dr." Brown, the team's negro rubber, summed it in this wise—

"Mistah Devoe, he make mos' fuss; but Mistah Cole, he sho' is some footsman."

Cole knew that he needed all his speed as well as the "breaks" to do what he hoped to do. With the start of Addison's swing he was off—indeed, with that delicate sense of anticipation which often converts an ordinary runner into an expert in base thievery, he beat the gun by the slightest fraction.

So seldom had McLaw ordered the squeeze that for an instant most of the spellbound spectators thought the base-runners were trying a foolhardy triple steal.

"He's stealing home!" they shouted as Devoe came surging up the lane. Gibbs nervously shoved out his hands to hurry Addison's pitch—Addison, confident that Devoe would be out at the plate if the pitch went through, refusing to be hurried.

Cole, with his big start and free stride, was nearing second when Addison let go; Hartshorn, a light-treading runner, was sweeping for third. Would Marty meet the ball? That was the vital question which gripped the players.

Marty met it. With a loose grip on his

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bat, with one hand holding it at the middle, with the weapon parallel to the plate in true Keeler fashion, he pushed it out squarely in the line of flight. There was the half-deadened sound which goes with the nicely executed bunt. The ball dropped soggily into fair territory and rolled slowly in the direction of second baseman Fillmore.

The second baseman already was coming in, as were the other infielders when they realized that Marty was about to bunt; but Fillmore, flustered by the unexpected move, made the mistake of tossing the ball home, a useless attempt to obliterate Devoe at the plate. The latter was over the rubber before the ball reached there.

The time consumed by this play, brief as it was, was precious to Hartshorn; and still more so to Cole. Hartshorn turned third. Cole had turned second, both burning the trail. Gibbs, seeing the mistake Fillmore had made in not fielding the ball to first to retire Marty, to retrieve the blunder by firing the ball to first himself.

In the scurry and bustle and uproar, he, too, was none too clear-headed; and when he threw, Hartshorn, who had been overlooked in the catcher's calculations as a scoring menace, called on the last ounce of his reserve as he hotfooted home. Not far behind him pounded Bug. Though Hartshorn was no slow traveler, Cole, who could step off his hundred in ten and one-fifth, closed up on him with every bound.

With Hartshorn on the last lap, Cole swung around third. He so described his arc before taking the turn as to make the final dash as nearly a straight line as possible. Events had so happened as to increase his chances of reaching third. He felt he could do that when Fillmore played into his hands by throwing home. While running he was thinking.

"If Hartshorn gets in and they get Marty at first, the score will be tied with two out and I'll have a chance to score later on a hit or an error." That plan he held in reserve. The desire to score then and there and win the game was still dominant, impelling. On Gibbs's throw to first Hartshorn tore into the plate before Banks could set himself and head him off with a return throw. Simultaneously with Gibbs's throw Cole resolved on the supreme effort. Were he caught at the plate the score was tied nevertheless.

His brain was working in lightning currents, his blood was running wild. Finishing a dash always had been his long suit. He was going faster after he passed third than at any other time. He was dimly conscious of an imperfect throw by Gibbs to Banks and that the latter had had to reach for the ball and had stepped back on first to retire Marty. Which meant yards to Cole.

Also he had a chaotic impression of yelling, jumping, yowling, hat-throwing, frenzied fans. Banks, never a rapid thinker, evidently thought the dynamic sequence of outbreaks was over for a while. They had been transpiring too swiftly for him, and he failed to grasp the fact that the kaleidoscopic jumble was in a fair way to receive its climactic touch unless he hurried.

"Home, home, throw home!" a voice shrieked in his ear. That brought him out of his trance. He caught a glimpse of a third figure in dizzy transit to the plate; and with a startled soliloquy— "For the love of Mike, how many of them are there on the bases?—" he let fly to the home portal. He threw between Gibbs and the onrushing specter; Gibbs lurched to take it; Cole, feet first, threw himself at the sanctuary with a long, catapultic slide; the impact knocked the ball from the catcher's hands, and while he still was scrambling for it Cole curled his foot over the plate.

"BUG," said McLaw to Cole in the dressing-room, "I guess anybody who has the nerve plus the speed to score from first on an infield out is worth four thousand dollars a year to me. You couldn't get away with it again in a hundred years, and I don't know whether you're a phenom. or crazy, but I'll chance it."

"Much obliged for the raise, Mac," Cole replied. "It'll come in handy. I want to get married this Winter."

"Ah, who's the girl?"

Cole told the whole story, and its effect on the whirlwind finish.

Cole and Lucy were married in December. Among the wedding gifts was a handsome silver tea-tray. The handles represented a ball-player sliding; and worked into the ornamentation, visible only on close inspection, there was a cabalistic design which looked like "5-4." The accompanying card to the bride read—

"Best wishes of Daniel McLaw to the real origininator of the triple squeeze."

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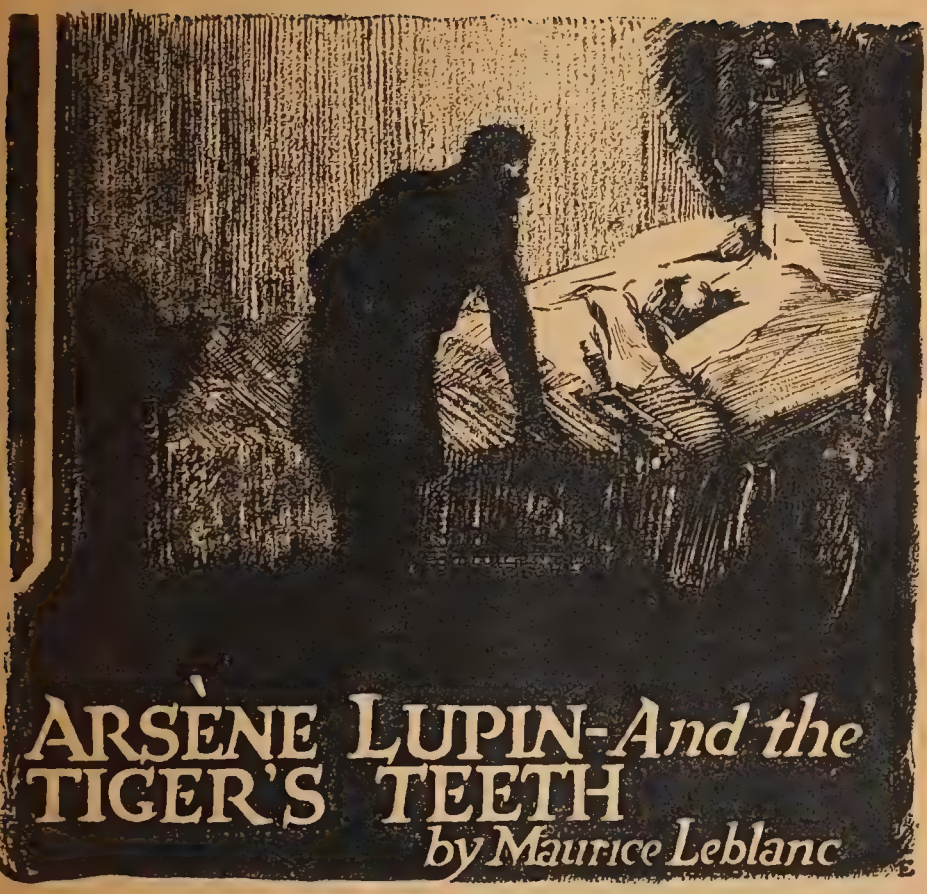

# ARSÈNE LUPIN—*And the* TIGER'S TEETH

*by Maurice Leblanc*

## CHAPTER I

D'ARTAGNAN, PORTHOS . . . AND MONTE-CRISTO

IT WAS half past four; M. Desmalions, the Prefect of Police, was not yet back at the office. His private secretary laid on the desk a bundle of letters and reports which he had annotated for his chief, rang the bell and said to the messenger who entered by the main door:

"Monsieur ler Préfet has sent for a number of people to see him at five o'clock. Here are their names. Show them into separate waiting-rooms, so that they can't communicate with one another, and let me have their cards when they come."

The messenger went out. The secretary was turning toward the small door that led to his room, when the main door opened once more and admitted a man who stopped and leaned swaying over the back of a chair.

"Why, it's you, Vérot!" said the secretary. "But what's happened? What's the matter?"

Inspector Vérot was a very stout, powerfully built man, with a big neck and shoulders and a florid complexion. He had obviously been upset by some violent excitement, for his face, streaked with red veins and usually so apoplectic, seemed almost pale.

"Oh, nothing, Monsieur le secrétaire!" he said.

"Yes, yes; you're not looking your usual self. You're gray in the face. . . . And the way you're perspiring. . . ."

Inspector Vérot wiped his forehead and, pulling himself together, said:

"It's just a little tiredness. . . . I've been overworking myself lately: I was very keen on clearing up a case which Monsieur



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Desmalions had put in my hands. All the same, I have a funny sort of feeling——"

"Will you have a pick-me-up?"

"No, no; I'm more thirsty."

"A glass of water?"

"No, thank you."

"What then?"

"I should like——I should like——"

His voice faltered. He wore a troubled look, as if he had suddenly lost his power of getting out another word. But he recovered himself with an effort and asked—

"Isn't Monsieur Desmalions here?"

"No; he won't be back till five, when he has an important meeting."

"Yes . . . I know . . . Most important. That's what I'm here for. But I should have liked to see him first. I should so much have liked to see him!"

The secretary stared at Vérot and said:

"What a state you're in! Is your message so urgent as all that?"

"It's very urgent indeed. It has to do with a crime that took place a month ago, to the day. And, above all, it's a matter of preventing two murders which are the outcome of that other crime and which are to be committed tonight. Yes, tonight, inevitably, unless we take the necessary steps."

"Sit down, Vérot, won't you?"

"You see, the whole thing has been planned in such an infernal manner! You would never have imagined——"

"Still, Vérot, as you know about it beforehand; and as Monsieur le Préfet is sure to give you full powers——"

"Yes, of course, of course. But, all the same, it's terrible to think that I might miss him. So I wrote him this letter, telling him all I know about the business. I thought it safer."

He handed the secretary a large yellow envelope and added:

"And here's a little box as well; I'll leave it on this table. It contains something that will serve to complete and explain the contents of the letter."

"But why don't you keep all that by you?"

"I'm afraid to. They're watching me. They're trying to get rid of me. I sha'n't be easy in my mind until some one besides myself knows the secret."

"Have no fear, Vérot. Monsieur le Préfet is bound to be back soon. Meanwhile, I advise you to go to the infirmary and ask for a pick-me-up."

The Inspector seemed undecided what to do. Once more he wiped away the perspiration that was trickling down his forehead. Then, drawing himself up, he left the office. When he was gone the secretary slipped the letter into a big bundle of papers that lay on the Prefect's desk and went out by the door leading to his own room.

He had hardly closed it behind him when the other door opened once again and the Inspector returned, spluttering—

"Monsieur le secrétaire . . . it'd be better if I showed you——"

The unfortunate man was as white as a sheet. His teeth were chattering. When he saw that the secretary was gone, he tried to walk across to the latter's private room. But he was seized with an attack of weakness and sank into a chair, where he remained for some minutes, moaning helplessly:

"What's the matter with me? . . . Have I been poisoned, too? . . . Oh, I don't like this, I don't like the look of this!"

The desk stood within reach of his hand. He took a pencil, drew a writing-pad toward him and began to scribble a few characters. But he next stammered:

"Why, no, it's not worth while. The Prefect will be reading my letter. . . . What on earth's the matter with me? I don't like this at all!"

Suddenly he rose to his feet and called out:

"Monsieur le secrétaire, we've got . . . we've got to . . . It's for tonight. Nothing can prevent——"

Stiffening himself with an effort of his whole will, he made for the door of the secretary's room with little short steps, like an automaton. But he reeled on the way—and had to sit down a second time.

A mad terror shook him from head to foot; and he uttered cries which were too faint, unfortunately, to be heard. He realized this and looked around for a bell, for a gong; but he was no longer able to distinguish anything. A veil of darkness seemed to weigh upon his eyes.

Then he dropped on his knees and crawled to the wall, beating the air with one hand, like a blind man, until he ended by touching some woodwork. It was the partition-wall.

He crept along this; but, as ill luck would have it, his bewildered brain showed him a false picture of the room, so that, instead of turning to the left as he should

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have done, he followed the wall to the right, behind a screen which concealed a third door.

His fingers touched the handle of this door and he managed to open it. He gasped: "Help! Help!" and fell at his full length in a sort of cupboard or closet which the Prefect of Police used as a dressing-room.

"Tonight!" he moaned, believing that he was making himself heard and that he was in the secretary's room. "Tonight! The job is fixed for tonight! You'll see. . . . The mark of the teeth! . . .It's awful! . . . Oh, the pain I'm in! . . . . It's the poison! Save me! Help!"

His voice died away. He repeated several times, as if in a nightmare:

"The teeth! The teeth! They're closing!"

Then his voice grew fainter still; and inarticulate sounds issued from his pallid lips. His mouth munched the air like the mouth of one of those old men who seem to be interminably chewing the cud. His head sank lower and lower on his breast. He heaved two or three sighs; a great shiver passed through his body; and he moved no more.

And the death-rattle began in his throat, very softly and rhythmically, broken only by interruptions in which a last instinctive effort appeared to revive the flickering life of the intelligence, and to rouse fitful gleams of consciousness in the dimmed eyes.

THE Prefect of Police entered his office at ten minutes to five. M. Desmalions, who had filled his post for the past three years with an authority that made him generally respected, was a heavily built man of fifty with a shrewd and intelligent face. His dress, consisting of a gray jacket-suit, white spats and a loosely flowing tie, in no way suggested the public official. His manners were easy, simple and full of good-natured frankness.

He touched a bell, and when his secretary entered, asked—

"Are the people whom I sent for here?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Préfet, and I gave orders that they were to wait in different rooms."

"Oh, it would not have mattered if they had met! However, perhaps it's better as it is. I hope that the American Ambassador did not trouble to come in person?"

"No, Monsieur le Préfet."

"Have you their cards?" asked the Prefect.

"Yes."

The Prefect of Police took the five visiting-cards which his secretary handed him and read:

"Mr. Archibald Bright, First Secretary, United States Embassy; Maître Lepertuis, Solicitor; Juan Caceres, Attaché to the Peruvian Legation; Major Comte d'Astrignac, retired."

The fifth card bore merely a name, without address or quality of any kind—

DON LUIS PERENNA

"That's the one I'm curious to see!" said M. Desmalions. "He interests me like the very deuce! Did you read the report of the Foreign Legion?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Préfet, and I confess that this gentleman puzzles me, too."

"He does, eh? Did you ever hear of such pluck? A sort of heroic madman, something absolutely wonderful! And then there's that nickname of Arsène Lupin which he earned among his messmates for the way in which he used to boss them and astound them! . . . How long is it since the death of Arsène Lupin?"

"It happened two years before your appointment, Monsieur le Préfet. His corpse and Mme. Kesselbach's were discovered under the ruins of a little *chalet* which was burned down close to the Luxemburg frontier. It was found at the inquest that he had strangled that monster, Mme. Kesselbach, whose crimes came to light afterward, and that he hanged himself after setting fire to the *chalet*." . . .

"It was a fitting end for that —— rascal," said M. Desmalions, "and I confess that I, for my part, much prefer not having him to fight against. . . . Let's see, where were we? Are the papers of the Mornington Inheritance ready for me?"

"On your desk, Monsieur le Préfet."

"Good. But I was forgetting: is Inspector Vérot here?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Préfet. I expect he's in the infirmary getting something to pull him together."

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"Why, what's the matter with the man?"

"He struck me as being in a queer state—rather ill."

"How do you mean?"

The secretary described his interview with Inspector Vérot.

"And you say he left a letter for me?" said M. Desmalions with a worried air. "Where is it?"

"Among the papers, Monsieur le Préfet."

"Very odd; it's all very odd. Vérot is a first-rate inspector, a very sober-minded fellow; and he doesn't get frightened easily. You might go and fetch him. Meanwhile, I'll look through my letters."

The secretary hurried away. When he returned, five minutes later, he stated, with an air of astonishment, that he had not seen Inspector Vérot.

"And what's more curious still," he added, "is that the messenger who saw him leave this room saw him come in again almost at once and did not see him go out a second time."

"Perhaps he only passed through here to go to you."

"To me, Monsieur le Préfet? I was in my room all the time."

"Then it's incomprehensible."

"Yes . . . unless we conclude that the messenger's attention was distracted for a second, as Vérot is neither here nor next door."

"That must be it. I expect he's gone to get some air outside; and he'll be back at any moment. For that matter, I sha'n't want him to start with."

The Prefect looked at his watch.

"Ten past five. You might tell the messenger to show those gentlemen in. . . . Wait, though——"

M. Desmalions hesitated. In turning over the papers he had found Vérot's letter. It was a large yellow business envelope, with "Café du Pont-Neuf" printed at the top.

The secretary suggested—

"In view of Vérot's absence, Monsieur le Préfet, and of what he said, it might be as well for you to see what's in the letter first."

M. Desmalions paused to reflect—

"Perhaps you're right."

And, making up his mind, he inserted a paper-knife into the envelope and cut it open. A cry escaped him.

"Oh, I say, this is a little too much!"

"What is it, Monsieur le Préfet?"

"Why, look here! A blank sheet of paper! That's all the envelope contains!"

"Impossible!"

"See for yourself—a plain sheet folded in four, with not a word on it!"

"But Vérot told me in so many words that he had said in that letter all that he knew about the case."

"He told you so, no doubt, but there you are! Upon my word, if I didn't know Inspector Vérot, I should think he was trying to play a game with me."

"It's a piece of carelessness, Monsieur le Préfet, at the worst."

"No doubt, a piece of carelessness, but I'm surprised at him. It doesn't do to be careless when the lives of two people are at stake. For he must have told you that there is a double murder planned for to-night?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Préfet, and under particularly alarming conditions; infernal was the word he used."

M. Desmalions was walking up and down the room, with his hands behind his back. He stopped at a small table.

"What's this little parcel addressed to me? 'Monsieur le Préfet de Police—to be opened in case of accident.'" . . . .

"Oh, yes," said the secretary, "I was forgetting! That's from Inspector Vérot, too; something of importance, he said, and serving to complete and explain the contents of the letter."

"Well," said M. Desmalions, who could not help laughing, "the letter certainly needs explaining; and, though there's no question of 'accident,' I may as well open the parcel."

As he spoke, he cut the string and discovered, under the paper, a box, a little cardboard box, which might have come from a druggist, but which was soiled and spoiled by the use to which it had been put.

He raised the lid. Inside the box were a few layers of cotton wool, which were also rather dirty, and in between these layers was half a cake of chocolate.

"What the deuce does this mean?" growled the Prefect in surprise.

He took the chocolate, looked at it and at once perceived what was peculiar about this cake of chocolate, which was also undoubtedly the reason why Inspector Vérot had kept it. Above and below, it bore the prints of teeth, very plainly marked, very plainly separated one from the other,

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penetrating to a depth of a tenth of an inch or so into the chocolate. Each possessed its individual shape and width, and each was divided from its neighbors by a different interval. The jaws which had started eating the cake of chocolate had dug into it the mark of four upper and five lower teeth.

M. Desmalions remained wrapped in thought and, with his head sunk on his chest, for some minutes resumed his walk up and down the room, muttering:

"This is queer. . . . There's a riddle here to which I should like to know the answer. That sheet of paper; the marks of those teeth: what does it all mean?"

But he was not the man to waste much time over a mystery which was bound to be cleared up presently, as Inspector Vérot must be either at the police office or somewhere just outside; and he said to his secretary:

"I can't keep those five gentlemen waiting any longer. Please have them shown in now. If Inspector Vérot arrives while they are here, as he is sure to do, let me know at once. I want to see him as soon as he comes. Except for that, see that I am not disturbed on any pretext, won't you?"

TWO minutes later, the messenger showed in Maître Lepertuis, a stout, red-faced man with whiskers and spectacles, followed by Archibald Bright, the Secretary of the American Embassy, and Caceres, the Peruvian Attaché. M. Desmalions, who knew all three of them, chatted to them until he stepped forward to receive Major Comte d'Astrignac, the hero of La Chouïa, who had been forced into premature retirement by his glorious wounds. The Prefect was complimenting him warmly on his gallant conduct in Morocco when the door opened once more.

"Don Luis Perenna, I believe?" said the Prefect, offering his hand to a man of middle height and rather slender build, wearing the military medal and the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor.

The newcomer's face and expression, his way of holding himself and his very youthful movements inclined one to look upon him as a man of forty, though there were wrinkles at the corners of the eyes and on the forehead which perhaps pointed to a few years more. He bowed.

"Yes, Monsieur le Préfet."

"Is that you, Perenna?" cried Comte d'Astrignac. "So you are still among the living?"

"Yes, Major, and delighted to see you again."

"Perenna alive! Why, we had lost all sight of you when I left Morocco! We thought you dead."

"I was a prisoner, that's all."

"A prisoner of the tribesmen: the same thing!"

"Not quite, Major: one can escape from anywhere. The proof stands before you."

The Prefect of Police, yielding to an irresistible attraction, spent some seconds in examining that powerful face, with the smiling glance, the frank and resolute eyes and the bronzed complexion, which looked as if it had been baked and baked again by the sun.

Then, motioning to his visitors to take chairs around his desk, M. Desmalions himself sat down and made a preliminary statement in clear and deliberate tones:

"The summons, gentlemen, which I addressed to each of you must have appeared to you rather peremptory and mysterious. And the manner in which I propose to open our conversation is not likely to diminish your surprise. But if you will attach a little credit to my method, you will soon realize that the whole thing is very simple and very natural. I will be as brief as I can."

He spread before him the bundle of documents prepared for him by his secretary and, consulting his notes as he spoke, continued:

"Over fifty years ago, in 1860, three sisters, three orphans, Ermeline, Elisabeth and Armande Roussel, aged twenty-two, twenty and eighteen respectively, were living at Saint-Etienne with a cousin named Victor, who was a few years younger. The eldest, Ermeline, was the first to leave Saint-Etienne. She went to London, where she married an Englishman of the name Mornington, by whom she had a son who was christened Cosmo.

"The family was very poor and went through hard times. Ermeline repeatedly wrote to her sisters to ask for a little assistance. Receiving no reply, she broke off the correspondence altogether. In 1870 Mr. and Mrs. Mornington left England for America. Five years later they were rich. Mr. Mornington died in 1878; but his widow continued to administer the fortune

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bequeathed to her and, as she had a genius for business and speculation, she increased this fortune until it attained a colossal figure. At her decease, in 1900, she left her son the sum of four hundred million francs."

The amount seemed to make an impression on the Prefect's hearers. He saw the Major and Don Luis Perenna exchange a glance and asked—

"You knew Cosmo Mornington, did you not?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Préfet," replied Comte d'Astrignac. "He was in Morocco when Perenna and I were fighting there."

"Just so," said M. Desmalions. "Cosmo Mornington had begun to travel about the world. He took up the practise of medicine, from what I hear, and, when occasion offered, treated the sick with great skill and, of course, without charge. He lived first in Egypt and then in Algiers and Morocco. Last year he settled down in Paris, where he died four weeks ago as the result of a most stupid accident."

"A carelessly administered hypodermic injection, was it not, Monsieur le Préfet?" asked the Secretary of the American Embassy. "It was mentioned in the papers and reported to us at the Embassy."

"Yes," said M. Desmalions. "To assist his recovery from a long attack of influenza which had kept him in bed all the Winter, Mr. Mornington, by his doctor's orders, used to give himself injections of glycerophosphate of soda. He must have omitted the necessary precautions on the last occasion when he did so; for the wound was poisoned, inflammation set in with lightning rapidity, and Mr. Mornington was dead in a few hours."

The Prefect of Police turned to the solicitor and asked—

"Have I summed up the facts correctly, Maître Lepertuis?"

"Absolutely, Monsieur le Préfet."

M. Desmalions continued:

"The next morning, Maître Lepertuis called here and, for reasons which you will understand when you have heard the document read, showed me Cosmo Mornington's will, which had been placed in his hands."

While the Prefect was looking through the papers, Maître Lepertuis added:

"I may be allowed to say that I saw my client only once before I was summoned to his death-bed; and that was on the day when he sent for me to his room in the hotel to hand me the will which he had just made. This was at the beginning of his influenza. In the course of the conversation he told me that he had been making some inquiries with a view to tracing his mother's family, and that he intended to pursue these inquiries seriously after his recovery. Circumstances, as it turned out, prevented his fulfilling his purpose."

Meanwhile, the Prefect of Police had taken from among the documents an open envelope containing two sheets of paper. He unfolded the larger of the two and said:

"This is the will. I will ask you to listen attentively while I read it and also the document attached to it."

The others settled themselves in their chairs; and the Prefect read out:

"The last will and testament of me, Cosmo Mornington, eldest son of Hubert Mornington and Ermeline Roussel his wife, a naturalized citizen of the United States of America. I give and bequeath to my adopted country three-fourths of my estate, to be employed on works of charity in accordance with the instructions, written in my hand, which Maître Lepertuis will be good enough to forward to the Ambassador of the United States. The remainder of my property, to the value of about one hundred million francs, consisting of deposits in various Paris and London banks, a list of which is in the keeping of Maître Lepertuis, I give and bequeath, in memory of my dear mother, to her favorite sister Elisabeth Roussel or her direct heirs; or, in default of Elisabeth and her heirs, to her second sister Armande Roussel or her direct heirs; or, in default of both sisters and their heirs, to their cousin Victor Roussel or his direct heirs.

"In the event of my dying without discovering the surviving members of the Roussel family, or of the cousin of the three sisters, I request my friend Don Luis Perenna to make all the necessary investigations. With this object, I hereby appoint him the executor of my will in so far as concerns the European portion of my estate and I beg him to undertake the conduct of the events that may arise after my death or in consequence of my death, to consider himself my representative and to act in all things for the benefit of my memory and the accomplishment of my wishes. In gratitude for this service and in memory of the two occasions on which he saved my life, I give and bequeath to the said Don Luis Perenna the sum of one million francs."

The Prefect stopped for a few seconds. Don Luis murmured: "Poor Cosmo! . . . I should not have needed that inducement to carry out his last wishes."

M. Desmalions continued his reading:

"Furthermore, if, within three months of my death, the investigations made by Don Luis Perenna and by Maître Lepertuis have led to no result; if no heir and no survivor of the Roussel family have come forward to receive the bequest, then the whole

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hundred million francs shall definitely, all later claims notwithstanding, accrue to my friend Don Luis Perenna. I know him well enough to feel assured that he will employ this fortune in a manner which shall accord with the loftiness of his schemes and the greatness of the plans which he described to me so enthusiastically in our tent in Morocco."

M. Desmalions stopped once more and raised his eyes to Don Luis, who remained silent and impassivè, though a tear glistened on his lashes. Comte d'Astrignac said—

"My congratulations, Perenna."

"Let me remind you, Major," he answered, "that this legacy is subject to a condition. And I swear that, if it depends on me, the survivors of the Roussel family shall be found."

"I'm sure of it," said the officer. "I know you."

"In any case," asked the Prefect of Police of Don Luis, "you do not refuse this conditional legacy?"

"Well, no," said Perenna, with a laugh. "There are things which one can't refuse."

"My question," said the Prefect, "was prompted by the last paragraph of the will:

'If, for any reason, my friend Perenna should refuse this legacy, or if he should have died before the date fixed for its payment, I request the Ambassador of the United States and the Prefect of Police for the time being to consult as to the means of building and maintaining in Paris a university confined to students and artists of American nationality and to devote the money to this purpose. And I hereby authorize the Prefect of Police in any case to receive a sum of three hundred thousand francs out of my estate for the benefit of the Paris Police Fund.'"

M. Desmalions folded the paper and took up another. "There is a codicil to the will. It consists of a letter which Mr. Mornington wrote to Maître Lepertuis some time after and which explains certain points with greater precision:

"I request Maître Lepertuis to open my will on the day after my death, in the presence of the Prefect of Police, who will be good enough to keep the matter an entire secret for a month. One month later, to the day, he will have the kindness to summon to his office Maître Lepertuis, Don Luis Perenna and a prominent member of the United States Embassy. Subsequent to the reading of the will, a cheque for one million francs shall be handed to my friend and legatee Don Luis Perenna, after a simple examination of his papers and a simple verification of his identity. I should wish this verification to be made as regards the personality by Major Comte d'Astrignac, who was his commanding officer in Morocco and who unfortunately had to retire prematurely from the Army; and as regards birth by a member of the Peruvian Legation, as Don Luis Perenna, though retaining his Spanish nationality, was born in Peru.

"Furthermore, I desire that my will be not communicated to the Roussel heirs until two days later, at Maître Lepertuis' office. Finally—and this is the last expression of my wishes as regards the disposal of my estate and the method of proceeding with that disposal—the Prefect of Police will be good enough to summon the persons aforesaid to his office, for a second time, at a date to be selected by himself, not less than sixty nor more than ninety days after the first meeting. Then and not till then will the definite legatee be named and proclaimed according to his rights, nor shall any be so named and proclaimed unless he be present at this meeting, at the conclusion of which Don Luis Perenna, who must also attend it, shall become the definite legatee if, as I have said, no survivor nor heir of the Roussel sisters or of their cousin Victor have come forward to claim the bequest."

REPLACING both documents in the envelope, the Prefect of Police concluded:

"You have now, gentlemen, heard the will of Mr. Cosmo Mornington, which explains your presence here. A sixth person will join us shortly: one of my detectives, whom I instructed to make the first inquiries about the Roussel family and who will give you the result of his investigations. But, for the moment, we must proceed in accordance with the testator's directions.

"Don Luis Perenna's papers, which he sent me, at my request, a fortnight ago, have been examined by myself and are perfectly in order. As regards his birth, I wrote and begged his Excellency the Peruvian Minister to collect the most precise information."

"The Minister entrusted this mission to me," said Señor Caceres, the Peruvian Attaché. "It offered no difficulties. Don Luis Perenna comes of an old Spanish family which emigrated thirty years ago, but which retained its estates, title, and property in Europe. I knew Don Luis' father in America; and he used to speak of his only son with the greatest affection. It was our Legation that informed the son, three years ago, of his father's death. I produce a copy of the letter sent to Morocco."

"And I have the original letter here, among the documents forwarded by Don Luis Perenna to the Prefect of Police. Do you, Major, recognize Private Perenna, who fought under your orders in the Foreign Legion?"

"I recognize him," said Comte d'Astrignac.

"Beyond the possibility of a mistake?"

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"Beyond the possibility of a mistake and without the least feeling of hesitation."

The Prefect of Police, with a laugh, hinted—

"You recognize Private Perenna, whom the men, carried away by a sort of astounded admiration of his exploits, used to call Arsène Lupin?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Préfet," replied the Major sharply; "the one whom the men called Arsène Lupin, but whom the officers called simply the Hero, the one who we used to say was as brave as d'Artagnan, as strong as Porthos——"

"And as mysterious as Monte-Cristo," said the Prefect of Police, laughing. "I have all this in the report which I received from the Fourth Regiment of the Foreign Legion. It is not necessary to read the whole of it; but it contains the unprecedented fact that Private Perenna, in the space of two years' time, received the Military Medal, received the Legion of Honor for exceptional services, and was mentioned fourteen times in despatches. I will pick out a detail here and there."

"Monsieur le Préfet, I beg of you!" protested Don Luis. "These are trivial matters, of no interest to anybody; and I do not see the reason——"

"There is every reason, on the contrary," declared M. Desmalions. "You gentlemen are here not only to hear a will read, but also to authorize its execution as regards the only one of its clauses that is to be carried out at once, the payment of a legacy of a million francs. It is necessary therefore that all of you should know what there is to know of the personality of the legatee. Consequently, I propose to continue——"

"In that case, Monsieur le Préfet," said Perenna, arising and making for the door, "you will allow me——"

"Right about turn! Halt! . . . Eyes front!" commanded Major d'Astrignac in a jesting tone.

He dragged Don Luis back to the middle of the room and forced him into a chair.

"Monsieur le Préfet," he said, "I plead for mercy for my old comrade-in-arms, whose modesty would really be put to too severe a test if the story of his prowess were read out in front of him. Besides, the report is here; and we can all of us consult it for ourselves. Without having seen it, I second every word of praise that it contains; and I declare that, in the course of my whole military career, I have never met a soldier who could compare with Private Perenna. And yet I saw plenty of fine fellows over there, the sort of demons whom you find only in the Legion and who will get themselves cut to bits for the sheer pleasure of the thing—for the lark of it, as they say; just to astonish one another.

"But not one of them came anywhere near Perenna. The chap whom we nicknamed d'Artagnan, Porthos, and de Bussy deserved to be classed with the most amazing heroes of legend and history. I have seen him perform feats which I should not care to relate, for fear of being treated as an impostor; feats so improbable that today, in my calmer moments, I wonder if I am quite sure that I did see them. One day, at Settat, as we were being pursued——"

"Another word, Major," cried Don Luis gaily, "and this time I really will go out! I must say you have a nice way of sparing my modesty!"

"My dear Perenna," replied Comte d'Astrignac, "I always told you that you had every good quality and only one fault, which was that you were not a Frenchman."

"And I always answered, Major, that I was French on my mother's side and a Frenchman in heart and temperament. There are things which only a Frenchman can do."

The two men again gripped each other's hands affectionately.

"Come," said the Prefect, "we'll say no more of your feats of prowess, Monsieur, nor of this report. I will mention one thing, however, which is that, after two years, you fell into an ambush of forty Berbers, that you were captured, and that you did not rejoin the Legion until last month."

"Just so, Monsieur le Préfet, in time to receive my discharge, as my five years' service was up."

"But how did Mr. Cosmo Mornington come to mention you in his will, when, at the time when he was making it, you had disappeared from view for eighteen months?"

"Cosmo and I used to correspond."

"What!"

"Yes; and I had informed him of my approaching escape and my return to Paris."

"But how did you manage it? Where were you? And how did you find the means? . . ."

Don Luis smiled without answering.

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"Monte-Cristo, this time," said M. Desmalions. "The mysterious Monte-Cristo."

"Monte-Cristo, if you like, Monsieur le Préfet. In point of fact, the mystery of my captivity and escape is a rather strange one. It may be interesting to throw some light upon it one of these days. Meanwhile, I must ask for a little credence."

A silence ensued. M. Desmalions once more inspected this curious individual; and he could not refrain from saying, as though in obedience to an association of ideas for which he himself was unable to account:

"One word more, and one only. What were your comrades' reasons for giving you that rather odd nickname of Arsène Lupin? Was it just an allusion to your pluck, to your physical strength?"

"There was something besides, Monsieur le Préfet: the discovery of a very curious theft, of which certain details, apparently incapable of explanation, had enabled me to name the perpetrator."

"So you have a gift for that sort of thing?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Préfet; a certain knack which I had the opportunity of employing in Africa on more than one occasion. Hence my nickname of Arsène Lupin. It was soon after the death of the man himself, you know, and he was much spoken of at the time."

"Was it a serious theft?"

"It was, rather; and it happened to be committed upon Cosmo Mornington, who was then living in the Province of Oran. That was really what started our relations."

There was a fresh silence; and Don Luis added:

"Poor Cosmo! That incident gave him an unshakable confidence in my little detective talents. He was always saying, 'Perenna, if I die murdered—' he had a fixed notion in his head that he would meet with a violent death—'if I die murdered, swear that you will pursue the culprit.' "

"His presentiment was not justified," said the Prefect of Police. "Cosmo Mornington was not murdered."

"That's where you make a mistake, Monsieur le Préfet," said Don Luis.

M. Desmalions gave a start.

"What! What's that? Cosmo Mornington——"

"I say that Cosmo Mornington did not die, as you think, of a carelessly administered injection, but that he died, as he feared he would, by foul play."

"But, Monsieur, your assertion is based on no evidence whatever!"

"It is based on fact, Monsieur le Préfet."

"Were you there? Do you know anything?"

"I was not there. A month ago I was still with the colors. I even admit that, when I arrived in Paris, not having seen the newspapers regularly, I did not know of Cosmo's death. In fact, I learned it from you just now, Monsieur le Préfet."

"In that case, Monsieur, you can not know more about it than I do, and you must accept the verdict of the doctor."

"I am sorry, but his verdict fails to satisfy me."

"But look here, Monsieur, what prompts you to make the accusation? Have you any evidence?"

"Yes."

"What evidence?"

"Your own words, Monsieur le Préfet."

"My own words? What do you mean?"

"I will tell you, Monsieur le Préfet. You began by saying that Cosmo Mornington had taken up medicine and practised it with great skill; next you said that he had given himself an injection which, carelessly administered, set up inflammation and caused his death within a few hours."

"Yes."

"Well, Monsieur le Préfet, I maintain that a man who practises medicine with great skill and who is accustomed to treating sick people, as Cosmo Mornington was, is incapable of giving himself a hypodermic injection without first taking every necessary antiseptic precaution. I have seen Cosmo at work, and I know how he set about things."

"Well?"

"Well, the doctor just wrote a certificate as any doctor will when there is no sort of clue to arouse his suspicions."

"So your opinion is——"

"Maître Lepertuis," asked Perenna, turning to the solicitor, "did you notice nothing unusual when you were summoned to Mr. Mornington's death-bed?"

"No, nothing. Mr. Mornington was in a state of coma."

"It's a strange thing in itself," observed Don Luis, "that an injection, however badly administered, should produce such rapid results. Were there no signs of suffering?"

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"No . . . or rather yes. . . . Yes; I remember; the face showed brown patches which I did not see on the occasion of my first visit."

"Brown patches? That confirms my supposition! Cosmo Mornington was poisoned."

"But how?" exclaimed the Prefect.

"By some substance introduced into one of the phials of glycero-phosphate, or into the syringe which the sick man employed."

"But the doctor?" M. Desmalions objected.

"Maître Lepertuis," Perenna continued, "did you call the doctor's attention to those brown patches?"

"Yes, but he attached no importance to them."

"Was it his ordinary medical adviser?"

"No, his ordinary medical adviser, Dr. Pujol, who happens to be a friend of mine and who had recommended me to him as a solicitor, was ill. The doctor whom I saw at his death-bed must have been a local practitioner."

"I have his name and address here," said the Prefect of Police, who had turned up the certificate. "Dr. Bellavoine, 14 Rue d'Astorg."

"Have you a medical directory, Monsieur le Préfet?"

M. Desmalions opened a directory and turned over the pages. Presently he declared—

"There is no Dr. Bellavoine; and there is no doctor living at 14 Rue d'Astorg."

## CHAPTER II

### A MAN DEAD

THE declaration was followed by a silence of some length. The Secretary of the American Embassy and the Peruvian Attaché had followed the conversation with eager interest. Major d'Astrignac nodded his head with an air of approval. To his mind, Perenna could not be mistaken.

The Prefect of Police confessed:

"Certainly, certainly . . . we have a number of circumstances here . . . that are fairly ambiguous. . . . Those brown patches; that doctor. . . . It's a case that wants looking into." And, questioning Don Luis Perenna as if in spite of himself, he asked, "No doubt, in your opinion, there is a possible connection between the murder . . . and Mr. Mornington's will?"

"That, Monsieur le Préfet, I can not tell. If there is, we should have to suppose that the contents of the will were known. Do you think they can have leaked out, Maître Lepertuis?"

"I don't think so, for Mr. Mornington seemed to behave with great caution."

"And there's no question, is there, of any indiscretion committed in your office?"

"By whom? No one handled the will except myself; and I alone have the key of the safe in which I put away documents of that importance every evening."

"The safe has not been broken into? There has been no burglary at your office?"

"No."

"You saw Cosmo Mornington in the morning?"

"Yes; on a Friday morning."

"What did you do with the will until the evening until you locked it away in your safe?"

"I probably put it in the drawer of my desk."

"And the drawer was not forced?"

Maître Lepertuis seemed taken aback and made no reply.

"Well?" asked Perenna.

"Well, yes, I remember . . . There was something, that day . . . that same Friday."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. When I came in from lunch, I noticed that the drawer was not locked . . . although I had locked it beyond the least doubt. At the time I attached comparatively little importance to the incident. Today, I understand, I understand. . . ."

Thus, little by little, were all the suppositions conceived by Don Luis verified; suppositions resting, it is true, upon just one or two clues, but yet containing an amount of intuition, of divination, that was really surprising in a man who had been present at none of the events between which he traced the connection so skilfully.

"We will lose no time, Monsieur," said the Prefect of Police, "in checking your statements, which you will confess to be a little venturesome, by the more positive evidence of one of my detectives who has the case in charge . . . and who ought to be here by now."

"Does his evidence bear upon Cosmo Mornington's heirs?" asked the solicitor.

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"Upon the heirs principally, because two days ago he telephoned to me that he had collected all the particulars, and also upon the very points which. . . . But wait; I remember that he spoke to my secretary of a murder committed a month ago today. . . . Now it's a month today since Mr. Cosmo Mornington——"

M. Desmalions pressed hard on a bell. His private secretary at once appeared.

"Inspector Vérot?" asked the Prefect sharply.

"He's not back yet."

"Have him fetched! Have him brought here! He must be found at all costs and without delay."

He turned to Don Luis Perenna.

"Inspector Vérot was here an hour ago, feeling rather unwell, very much excited, it seems, and declaring that he was being watched and followed. He said he wanted to make a most important statement to me about the Mornington case and to warn the police of two murders which are to be committed tonight . . . and which would be a consequence of the murder of Cosmo Mornington."

"And he was unwell, you say?"

"Yes; ill at ease and even very queer and imagining things. By way of being prudent, he left a detailed report on the case for me. Well, the report is simply a blank sheet of letter-paper.

"Here is the paper and the envelope in which I found it. And here is a cardboard box which he also left behind him. It contains a cake of chocolate with the marks of teeth on it."

"May I look at the two things you have mentioned, Monsieur le Préfet?"

"Yes, but they won't tell you anything."

"Perhaps so. . . ."

Don Luis examined at length the cardboard box and the yellow envelope, on which were printed the words, "Café du Pont-Neuf." The others awaited his words as if they were bound to shed an unexpected light. He merely said:

"The handwriting is not the same on the envelope and the box. The writing on the envelope is less plain, a little shaky, obviously imitated."

"Which proves——?"

"Which proves, Monsieur le Préfet, that this yellow envelope does not come from your detective. I presume that, after writing his report at a table in the Café du Pont-Neuf and closing it, he had a moment of inattention during which somebody substituted for his envelope another with the same address, but containing a blank sheet of paper."

"That's a supposition!" said the Prefect.

"Perhaps; but what is certain, Monsieur le Préfet, is that your Inspector's presentiments are well grounded, that he is being closely watched, that the discoveries about the Mornington inheritance which he has succeeded in making are interfering with criminal designs and that he is in terrible danger."

"Come, come!"

"He must be rescued, Monsieur le Préfet. Ever since the commencement of this meeting, I have felt persuaded that we are up against an attempt which has already begun. I hope that it is not too late and that your Inspector has not been the first victim."

"My dear sir," exclaimed the Prefect of Police, "you declare all this with a conviction which rouses my admiration, but which is not enough to establish the fact that your fears are justified. Inspector Vérot's return will be the best proof."

"Inspector Vérot will not return."

"But why not?"

"Because he has returned already. The messenger saw him return."

"The messenger was dreaming. If you have no proof but that man's evidence——"

"I have another proof, Monsieur le Préfet, which Inspector Vérot himself has left of his presence here: these few, almost illegible letters which he scribbled on this memorandum pad, which your secretary did not see him write and which have just caught my eye. Look at them. Are they not a proof, a definite proof, that he came back?"

THE Prefect did not conceal his perturbation. The others all seemed impressed. The secretary's return but increased their apprehensions: nobody had seen Inspector Vérot.

"Monsieur le Préfet," said Don Luis, "I earnestly beg you to have the office messenger in."

And, as soon as the messenger was there, he asked him, without even waiting for M. Desmalions to speak—

"Are you sure that Inspector Vérot entered this room a second time?"

"Absolutely sure."

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"Sure, too, that he did not go out again?"

"Absolutely sure."

"And your attention was not distracted for a moment?"

"Not for a moment."

"There, Monsieur, you see!" cried the Prefect. "If Inspector Vérot were here, we should know it."

"He is here, Monsieur le Préfet."

"What!"

"Excuse my obstinacy, Monsieur le Préfet, but I say that, when some one enters a room and does not go out again, he is still in that room."

"Hiding?" said M. Desmalions, who was growing more and more irritated.

"No, but fainting, ill . . . dead, perhaps."

"But where, hang it all?"

"Behind that screen."

"There's nothing behind that screen; nothing but a door."

"And that door——?"

"Leads to a dressing-room."

"Well, Monsieur le Préfet, Inspector Vérot, tottering, losing his head, imagining himself to be going from your office to your secretary's room, fell into your dressing-room."

M. Desmalions ran to the door, but, at the moment of opening it, shrank back. Was it apprehension, the wish to withdraw himself from the influence of that astonishing man, who gave his orders with such authority and who seemed to command events themselves?

Don Luis stood waiting imperturbably, in a deferential attitude.

"I can not believe——" said M. Desmalions.

"Monsieur le Préfet, I would remind you that Inspector Vérot's revelations may save the lives of two persons who are doomed to die tonight. Every minute lost is irreparable."

M. Desmalions shrugged his shoulders. But that man mastered him with the power of his conviction; and the Prefect opened the door.

He did not make a movement, did not utter a cry. He simply muttered—

"Oh, is it possible——!"

By the pale gleam of light that entered through a ground-glass window, they saw the body of a man lying on the floor.

"The Inspector! Inspector Vérot!" gasped the office messenger, running forward.

He and the secretary raised the body and placed it in an armchair in the Prefect's office.

Inspector Vérot was still alive, but so little alive that they could scarcely hear the beating of his heart. A drop of saliva trickled from the corner of his mouth. His eyes were devoid of all expression. However, certain muscles of the face kept moving, perhaps with the effort of a will that seemed to linger almost beyond life.

Don Luis muttered:

"Look, Monsieur le Préfet! . . . The brown patches!"

One same dread unnerved all. They began to ring bells and open doors and call for help.

"Send for the doctor!" ordered M. Desmalions. "Tell them to bring a doctor, the first that comes . . . and a priest. We can't let the poor man——"

Don Luis raised his arm to demand silence.

"There is nothing more to be done," he said. "We shall do better to make the most of these last moments. . . . Have I your permission, Monsieur le Préfet?"

He bent over the dying man, laid the swaying head against the back of the chair and, in a very gentle voice, whispered:

"Vérot, it's Monsieur le Préfet speaking to you. We should like a few particulars about what is to take place tonight. Do you hear me, Vérot? If you hear me, close your eyelids."

The eyelids were lowered. But was it not merely chance? Don Luis went on:

"You have found the heirs of the Roussel sisters, that much we know; and it is two of those heirs who are threatened with death. The double murder is to be committed tonight. But what we do not know is the name of those heirs, who are doubtless not called Roussel. You must tell us the name.

"Listen to me: you wrote on a memorandum pad three letters which seem to form the syllable Fau. . . . Am I right? Is this the first syllable of a name? Which is the next letter after those three? Close your eyes when I mention the right letter. . . . Is it 'B?' Is it 'C?' "

But there was now not a flicker in the Inspector's pallid face. The head dropped heavily on the chest. Vérot gave two or three sighs; his frame shook with one great shiver; and he moved no more.

He was dead.

The tragic scene had been enacted so

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swiftly that the men who were its shuddering spectators remained for a moment confounded. The solicitor made the sign of the cross and went down on his knees. The Prefect murmured:

"Poor Vérot! . . . He was a good man, who thought only of the service, of his duty. Instead of going and getting himself seen to—and who knows? Perhaps he might have been saved—he came back here in the hope of communicating his secret. Poor Vérot!"

"Was he married? Are there any children?" asked Don Luis.

"He leaves a wife and three children," replied the Prefect.

"I will look after them," said Don Luis simply.

Then, when they brought a doctor and when M. Desmalions gave orders for the corpse to be carried to another room, Don Luis took the doctor aside and said:

"There is no doubt that Inspector Vérot was poisoned. Look at his wrist: you will see the mark of a puncture with a ring of inflammation round it."

"Then he was pricked in that place?"

"Yes, with a pin or the point of a pen; and not as violently as they may have wished, because death did not ensue until some hours later."

THE messengers removed the corpse; and soon there was no one left in the office except the five persons whom the Prefect had originally sent for. The American Secretary of Embassy and the Peruvian Attaché, considering their continued presence unnecessary, went away, after warmly complimenting Don Luis Perenna on his powers of penetration.

Next came the turn of Major d'Astrignac, who shook his former subordinate by the hand with obvious affection. And Maître Lepertuis and Perenna, having fixed an appointment for the payment of the legacy, were themselves on the point of leaving, when M. Desmalions entered briskly.

"Ah, so you're still here, Don Luis Perenna! . . . I'm glad of that. I have an idea: those three letters which you say you made out on the writing-table, are you sure they form the syllable Fau?"

"I think so, Monsieur le Préfet. See for yourself: are not these an 'F,' an 'a' and a 'u'? . . And observe that the 'F' is a capital, which made me suspect that the letters are the first syllable of a proper name."

"Just so, just so," said M. Desmalions. "Well, curiously enough, that syllable happens to be—— But wait, we'll verify our facts. . . ."

M. Desmalions searched hurriedly among the letters which his secretary had handed him on his arrival and which lay on a corner of the table:

"Ah, here we are!" he exclaimed, glancing at the signature of one of the letters. "Here we are! It's as I thought: 'Fauville.' . . . The first syllable is the same. . . . Look; 'Fauville,' just like that, without Christian name or initials. The letter must have been written in a feverish moment; there is no date nor address. . . . The writing is shaky."

And M. Desmalions read out:

"MONSIEUR LE PRÉFET:

"A great danger is hanging over my head and over the head of my son. Death is approaching apace. I shall have tonight, or tomorrow morning at latest, the proofs of the abominable plot that threatens us. I ask leave to bring them to you in the course of the morning. I am in need of protection and I call for your assistance.

"Permit me to be, etc. FAUVILLE."

"No other designation?" asked Perenna. "No letter-heading?"

"None. But there is no mistake. Inspector Vérot's declarations agree too evidently with this despairing appeal. It is clearly M. Fauville and his son who are to be murdered tonight. And the terrible thing is that, as this name of Fauville is a very common one, it is impossible for our inquiries to succeed in time."

"What, Monsieur le Préfet? Surely, by straining every nerve——"

"Certainly, we will strain every nerve; and I shall set all my men to work. But observe that we have not the slightest clue."

"Oh, it would be awful!" cried Don Luis. "Those two creatures doomed to death; and we unable to save them! Monsieur le Préfet, I ask you to authorize me——"

He had not finished speaking when the Prefect's private secretary entered with a visiting-card in his hand.

"Monsieur le Préfet, this caller was so persistent. . . . I hesitated——"

M. Desmalions took the card and uttered an exclamation of mingled surprise and joy.



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"Look, Monsieur," he said to Perenna. And he handed him the card:

HIPPOLYTE FAUVILLE
CIVIL ENGINEER
14 BIS, BOULEVARD SUCHET

"Come!" said M. Desmalions. "Chance is favoring us. If this M. Fauville is one of the Roussel heirs, our task becomes very much easier."

"In any case, Monsieur le Préfet," the solicitor interposed, "I must remind you that one of the clauses of the will stipulates that it shall not be read until forty-eight hours have elapsed. M. Fauville, therefore, must not be informed——"

The door was pushed open and a man hustled the messenger aside and rushed in.

"Inspector . . . Inspector Vérot?" he spluttered. "He's dead, isn't he? I was told——"

"Yes, Monsieur, he is dead."

"Too late! I'm too late!" he stammered. And he sank into a chair, clasping his hands and sobbing—

"Oh, the scoundrels, the scoundrels!"

He was a pale, hollow-cheeked, sickly-looking man of about fifty. His head was bald, above a forehead lined with deep wrinkles. A nervous twitching affected his chin and the lobes of his ears. Tears stood in his eyes.

The Prefect asked:

"Whom do you mean, Monsieur? Inspector Vérot's murderers? Are you able to name them, to assist our inquiry?"

Hippolyte Fauville shook his head.

"No, no, it would be useless, for the moment. . . . My proofs would not be sufficient. . . . No, really not."

He had already risen from his chair and stood apologizing:

"Monsieur le Préfet, I have disturbed you unnecessarily, but I wanted to know. . . . I was hoping that Inspector Vérot might have escaped. . . . His evidence, joined to mine, would have been invaluable. But perhaps he was able to tell you?"

"No; he spoke of this evening . . . of tonight——"

Hippolyte Fauville started.

"This evening! Then the time has come! . . . But no, it's impossible, they can't do anything to me yet. . . . They are not ready——"

"Inspector Vérot declared, however, that the double murder would be committed tonight."

"No, Monsieur le Préfet, he was wrong there. . . . I know all about it. . . . Tomorrow evening at the earliest . . . and we will catch them in a trap. . . . Oh, the scoundrels!"

Don Luis went up to him and asked—

"Your mother's name was Ermeline Roussel, was it not?"

"Yes, Ermeline Roussel. She is dead now."

"And she was from Saint-Etienne?"

"Yes. But why these questions?"

"Monsieur le Préfet will tell you tomorrow. . . . One word more." He opened the cardboard box left by Inspector Vérot. "Does this cake of chocolate mean anything to you? These marks?"

"Oh, how awful!" said the civil engineer, in a hoarse tone. "Where did the Inspector find it?"

He dropped into his chair again, but only for a moment; then, drawing himself up, he hurried toward the door with a jerky step.

"I'm going, Monsieur le Préfet, I'm going. Tomorrow morning, I'll show you. . . . I shall have all the proofs. . . . And the police will protect me. . . . I am ill, I know, but I want to live! I have the right to live . . . And my son, too. . . . And we will live. . . . Oh, the scoundrels!——"

And he ran, stumbling out, like a drunken man.

M. Desmalions rose hastily.

"I shall have inquiries made about that man's circumstances. . . . I shall have his house watched. I've telephoned to the detective office already. I'm expecting some one in whom I have every confidence."

Don Luis said:

"Monsieur le Préfet, I beg you, with an earnestness which you will understand, to authorize me to pursue the investigation. Cosmo Mornington's will makes it my duty and, allow me to say, gives me the right to do so. M. Fauville's enemies have given proofs of extraordinary cleverness and daring. I want to have the honor of being at the post of danger tonight, at M. Fauville's house, near his person."

The Prefect hesitated. He was bound to

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reflect how greatly to Don Luis Perenna's interest it was that none of the Mornington heirs should be discovered or at least be able to come between him and the millions of the inheritance. Was it safe to attribute to a noble sentiment of gratitude, to a lofty conception of friendship and duty, that strange longing to protect Hippolyte Fauville against the death that threatened him?

For some seconds M. Desmalions watched that resolute face, those intelligent eyes, at once innocent and satirical, grave and smiling, eyes through which you could certainly not penetrate their owner's baffling individuality, but which nevertheless looked at you with an expression of absolute frankness and sincerity. Then he called his secretary.

"Has any one come from the detective office?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Préfet; Sergeant Mazeroux is there."

"Please have him shown in."

And, turning to Perenna:

"Sergeant Mazeroux is one of our smartest detectives. I used to employ him together with that poor Vérot when I wanted any one more than ordinarily active and sharp. He will be of great use to you."

SERGEANT MAZEROUX entered. He was a short, lean, wiry man, whose drooping mustache, heavy eyelids, watery eyes and long, lank hair gave him a most doleful appearance.

"Mazeroux," said the Prefect, "you will have heard, by this time, of your comrade Vérot's death and of the horrible circumstances attending it. We must now revenge him and prevent further crimes. This gentleman, who knows the case from end to end, will explain all that is necessary. You will work with him and report to me tomorrow morning."

This meant giving a free hand to Don Luis Perenna and relying on his power of initiative and his perspicacity. Don Luis bowed.

"I thank you, Monsieur le Préfet. I hope that you will have no reason to regret the trust which you are good enough to place in me."

And, taking leave of M. Desmalions and Maître Lepertuis, he went out with Sergeant Mazeroux.

As soon as they were outside, he told Mazeroux what he knew. The detective seemed much impressed by his companion's professional gifts and quite ready to be guided by his views.

They decided first to go to the Café du Pont-Neuf. Here they learned that Inspector Vérot, who was a regular customer of the place, had written a long letter there that morning. And the waiter remembered that a man at the next table, who had entered the café at almost the same time as the Inspector, had also asked for writing paper and called twice for yellow envelopes.

"That's it," said Mazeroux to Don Luis. "As you suspected, one letter has been substituted for the other."

The description given by the waiter was pretty explicit: a tall man, with a slight stoop, wearing a reddish-brown beard cut into a point, a tortoise-shell eye-glass with a black silk ribbon and an ebony walking-stick with a handle shaped like a swan's head.

"That's something for the police to go upon," said Mazeroux.

They were leaving the café when Don Luis stopped his companion.

"One moment."

"What's the matter?"

"We've been followed."

"Followed! What next? And by whom, pray?"

"No one that matters. I know who it is and I may as well settle his business and have done with it. Wait for me. I shall be back; and I'll show you some fun.

He returned in a minute with a tall, thin man with his face set in whiskers. He introduced him:

"M. Mazeroux; a friend of mine, Señor Caceres, an attaché at the Peruvian Legation. Señor Caceres took part in the interview at the Prefect's just now. It was he who, on the Peruvian Minister's instructions, collected the documents bearing upon my identity." And he added gaily: "So you were looking for me, dear Señor Caceres. Indeed, I expected, when we left the police office——"

The Peruvian Attaché made a sign and pointed to Sergeant Mazeroux. Perenna replied:

"Oh, pray don't mind M. Mazeroux! You can speak before him: he is the soul of discretion. . . . Besides, he knows all about the business."

The Attaché was silent. Perenna made him sit down in front of him.

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"Speak without beating about the bush, dear Señor Caceres. It's a subject that calls for plain dealing; and I don't mind a blunt word or two. It saves such a lot of time! Come on. You want money, I suppose? Or, rather, more money. How much?"

The Peruvian hesitated once more, gave a glance at Don Luis' companion and then, suddenly making up his mind, said in a dull voice—

"Fifty thousand francs!"

"Oh, by Jove, by Jove!" cried Don Luis. "You're greedy, you know! What do you say, M. Mazeroux? Fifty thousand francs is a lot of money. Especially as . . . . Look here, my dear Caceres, let's go over the ground again.

"Three years ago I had the honor of making your acquaintance in Algeria, when you were touring the country. At the same time, I understood the sort of man you were; and I asked you if you could manage, in three years, with my name of Perenna, to fix me up a Spanish-Peruvian identity, furnished with unquestionable papers and respectable ancestors. You said, 'Yes.' We settled the price—twenty thousand francs. Last week, when the Prefect of Police asked me for my papers, I came to see you and learned that you had just been instructed to make inquiries into my antecedents.

"Everything was ready, as it happened. With the papers of a deceased Spanish-Peruvian nobleman, named Pereira, properly revised, you had faked me up a first-rate civic status. We arranged what you were to say before the Prefect of Police; and I paid up the twenty thousand. We were quits. What more do you want?"

The Peruvian Attaché did not betray the least embarrassment. He put his two elbows on the table and said very calmly:

"Monsieur, when treating with you, three years ago, I thought I was dealing with a gentleman who, hiding himself under the uniform of the Foreign Legion, wished to recover the means to live respectably afterward. Today I have to do with the universal legatee of Cosmo Mornington; with a man who tomorrow, under a false name, will receive the sum of one million francs and in a few months, perhaps, the sum of a hundred millions. That's quite a different thing."

The argument seemed to strike Don Luis. Nevertheless, he objected—

"And, if I refuse?"

"If you refuse, I shall inform the solicitor and the Prefect of Police that I made an error in my inquiry and that there is some mistake about Don Luis Perenna. In consequence of which you will receive nothing at all and very likely find yourself in jail."

"With you, my worthy sir."

"Me?"

"Of course—on a charge of forgery and tampering with registers. For you don't imagine that I should take it lying down."

The Attaché did not reply. His nose, which was a very big one, seemed to lengthen out still farther between his two long whiskers.

Don Luis began to laugh.

"Come, Señor Caceres, don't pull such a face! No one's going to hurt you. Only don't think that you can corner me. Better men than you have tried and have broken their backs in the process. And, upon my word, you don't cut much of a figure when you're doing your best to blackmail your fellow men.

"You look a little cheap, in fact, Caceres: a little cheap is what you look. So it's understood; eh? We lay down our arms. No more base designs against our excellent friend Perenna. Excellent, Señor Caceres, excellent! And now I'll be magnanimous and prove to you that the decent man of us two is . . . the one who any one would have thought!"

He produced a check-book on the Crédit Lyonnais.

"Here, my dear chap. Here's twenty thousand francs as a present from Cosmo Mornington's legatee. Put it in your pocket and look pleasant. Say, 'Thank you' to the kind gentleman and make yourself scarce, without turning your head any more than if you were one of old man Lot's daughters. Off you go; hoosh!"

This was said in such a manner that the Attaché obeyed Don Luis Perenna's injunctions to the letter. He smiled as he pocketed the check, said, "Thank you" twice over, and made off without turning his head.

"The low hound!" muttered Don Luis. "What do you say to that, sergeant?"

Sergeant Mazeroux was looking at him in stupefaction, with his eyes starting from his head.

"Well, but, Monsieur——"

"What, sergeant?"

"Well, but, Monsieur, who are you?"

"Who am I?"

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"Yes."

"Didn't they tell you? A Peruvian nobleman, or a Spanish nobleman, I don't know which. In short, Don Luis Perenna."

"Bunkum! I've just heard——"

"Don Luis Perenna, late of the Foreign Legion."

"Enough of that, Monsieur——"

"Medaled and decorated with a stripe on every seam."

"Once more, Monsieur, enough of that; and come along with me to the Prefect."

"But let me finish, hang it! I was saying, late private in the Foreign Legion. . . . Late hero. . . . Late prisoner at the Sureté. . . . Late Russian prince. . . . Late chief of the Paris Detective Service. . . . Late——"

"But you're mad!" snarled the sergeant. "What's all this story?"

"It's a true story, sergeant, and quite genuine. You ask me who I am; and I'm telling you categorically. Must I go farther back? I have still more titles to offer you: Marquis, Baron, Duke, Archduke, Grand Duke, Petty Duke, Superduke . . . the whole Almanach de Gotha, by Jingo! If any one told me that I had been a king, by all that's holy, I shouldn't dare swear to the contrary!"

Sergeant Mazeroux put out his own hands, accustomed to rough work, seized the seemingly frail wrists of the man addressing him and said:

"No nonsense, now. I don't know whom I've got hold of, but I sha'n't let you go. You can say what you have to say at the Prefect's."

"Don't speak so loud, Alexandre."

The two frail wrists were released with unparalleled ease; the sergeant's powerful hands were caught and rendered useless; and Don Luis grinned—

"Don't you know me, you idiot?"

Sergeant Mazeroux did not utter a word. His eyes started still farther from his head. He tried to understand and remained absolutely dumfounded.

The sound of that voice, that way of jesting, that schoolboy playfulness allied with that audacity, the quizzing expression of those eyes and lastly that Christian name of Alexandre, which was not his name at all and which only one person used to give him, years ago! Was it possible?

"The chief!" he stammered. "The chief!"

"Why not?"

"No, no, because——"

"Because what?"

"Because you're dead."

"Well, what about it? D'you think it interferes with my living, being dead?"

And, as the other seemed more and more perplexed, Perenna laid his hand on the detective's shoulder and said—

"Who put you into the police office?"

"The Chief Detective, M. Lenormand."

"And who was M. Lenormand?"

"The chief."

"You mean Arsène Lupin, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Lupin, the greatest law-breaker in all France?"

"The same."

"Well, Alexandre, don't you know that it was much more difficult for Arsène Lupin to be Chief Detective—and a masterly Chief Detective he was—than to be Don Luis Perenna, to be decorated in the Foreign Legion, to be a hero and even to be alive after he was dead?"

Sergeant Mazeroux examined his companion in silence. Then his lack-luster eyes brightened, his drab features turned scarlet and, suddenly striking the table with his fist, he growled in an angry voice that rang with sincerity:

"All right, very well! But I warn you that you mustn't reckon on me. No, not that! I'm in the Detective Service; and in the Detective Service I remain. Nothing doing! I've tasted honesty and I mean to eat no other bread. No, no, no, no! No more humbug!"

Perenna shrugged his shoulders.

"Alexandre, you're an ass. Upon my word, the bread of honesty hasn't enlarged your intelligence. Who talked of starting again?"

"But——"

"But what?"

"All your maneuvers, chief."

"My maneuvers! Do you think I have anything to say to this business?"

"Look here, chief——"

"Why, I'm out of it altogether, my lad! Two hours ago, I knew no more about it than you do. It's Providence that chucked this legacy at me, without so much as shouting, 'Heads!' And it's in obedience to the decrees of——"

"Then——?"

"It's my mission in life to avenge Cosmo Mornington, to find his natural heirs, to

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protect them and to divide among them the hundred millions that belong to them. That's all. Don't you call that the mission of an honest man?"

"Yes, but——"

"Yes, but, if I don't fulfil it as an honest man—— Is that what you mean?"

"Chief——"

"Well, my lad, if you notice the least thing in my conduct that dissatisfies you, if you discover a speck of black on Don Luis Perenna's conscience, examined under the magnifying-glass, don't hesitate: collar me with both hands. I authorize you to do it. I order you to do it. Is that enough for you?"

"It's not enough for it to be enough for me, chief."

"What are you talking about?"

"There are the others."

"Explain yourself."

"Suppose you're nabbed?"

"How?"

"You can be betrayed."

"By whom?"

"Your old mates."

"Gone away. I've sent them out of France."

"Where to?"

"That's my secret. I left you at the police office, in case I should require your services; and you see that I was right."

"But suppose the police discover your real identity."

"Well?"

"They'll arrest you."

"Impossible."

"Why?"

"They can't arrest me."

"For what reason?"

"You've said it yourself, fat-head; a first-class, tremendous, indisputable reason."

"What do you mean?"

"*I'm dead!*"

Mazeroux seemed staggered. The argument struck him fully. He at once perceived it, with all its common sense and all its absurdity. And suddenly he burst into a roar of laughter which bent him in two and convulsed his doleful features in the oddest fashion.

"Oh, chief, just the same as always! . . . Lord, how funny! . . . Will I come along? I should think I would! As often as you like! You're dead and buried and put out of sight! . . . Oh, what a joke, what a joke!"

## CHAPTER III

### A MAN DOOMED

HIPPOLYTE FAUVILLE, civil engineer, lived on the Boulevard Suchet, near the fortifications, in a fair-sized private house having on its left a small garden in which he had built a large room that served as his study. The garden was thus reduced to a few trees and to a strip of grass along the railings, which were covered with ivy and contained a gate that opened on the Boulevard Suchet.

Don Luis Perenna went with Mazeroux to the Commissary's office at Passy, where Mazeroux, on Perenna's instructions, gave his name and asked to have M. Fauville's house watched during the night by two policemen who were to arrest any suspicious person trying to obtain admission. The Commissary agreed to the request.

Don Luis and Mazeroux next dined in the neighborhood. At nine o'clock they reached the front door of the house.

"Alexandre!" said Perenna.

"Yes, chief?"

"You're not afraid?"

"No, chief. Why should I be?"

"Why? Because, in defending M. Fauville and his son, we are attacking people who have a great interest in doing away with them and because those people seem pretty wide-awake. Your life, my life—a breath, a trifle. You're not afraid?"

"Chief," replied Mazeroux, "I can't say if I shall ever know what it means to be afraid. But there's one case in which I certainly shall never know fear."

"What case is that, old-timer?"

"As long as I'm by your side, chief."

And firmly he rang the bell.

THE door was opened by a man servant. Mazeroux sent in his card.

Hippolyte received the two visitors in his study. The table, on which stood a movable telephone, was littered with books, pamphlets and papers. There were two tall desks, with diagrams and drawings, and some glass cases containing reduced models, in ivory and steel, of apparatus constructed or invented by the engineer.

A large sofa stood against the wall. In one corner was a winding staircase that led to a circular gallery. An electric chandelier

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hung from the ceiling over the center of the room.

Mazeroux, after stating his quality and introducing his friend Perenna as also sent by the Prefect of Police, at once expounded the object of their visit. M. Desmalions, he said, was feeling anxious on the score of very serious indications which he had just received and, without waiting for the next day's interview, begged M. Fauville to take all the precautions which his detectives might advise.

Fauville at first displayed a certain ill humor.

"My precautions are taken, gentlemen, and well taken. And, on the other hand, I am afraid that your interference may do harm."

"In what way?"

"By arousing the attention of my enemies and preventing me, for that reason, from collecting proofs which I need in order to confound them."

"Can you explain——?"

"No, I can not . . . Tomorrow, tomorrow morning . . . Not before."

"And, if it's too late?" Don Luis interjected.

"Too late? Tomorrow?"

"Inspector Vérot told M. Desmalions' secretary that the two murders would take place tonight. He said it was fatal and irrevocable."

"Tonight?" cried Fauville angrily. "I tell you no. Not tonight. I'm sure of that. There are things which I know, aren't there, which you do not?"

"Yes," retorted Don Luis, "but there may also be things which Inspector Vérot knew and which you don't know. He had perhaps learned more of your enemies' secrets than you did.

"The proof is that he was suspected; that a man carrying an ebony walking-stick was seen watching his movements; that, lastly, he was killed."

Hippolyte Fauville's self-assurance decreased. Perenna took advantage of this to insist; and he insisted to such good purpose that Fauville, though without withdrawing from his reserve, ended by yielding before a will that was stronger thanhis own.

"Well, but you surely don't intend to spend the night in here?"

"We do indeed."

"Why, it's ridiculous! It's sheer waste of time! After all, looking at things from the worst—— And what do you want besides?"

"Who lives in the house?"

"Who? My wife, to begin with. She has the first floor."

"Mme. Fauville is not threatened?"

"No, not at all. It's I who am threatened with death; I and my son Edmond. That is why, for the past week, instead of sleeping in my regular bedroom, I have locked myself up in this room. I have given my work as a pretext; a quantity of writing which keeps me up very late and for which I need my son's assistance."

"Does he sleep here, then?"

"He sleeps above us, in a little room which I have had arranged for him. The only access to it is by this inner staircase."

"Is he there now?"

"Yes, he's asleep."

"How old is he?"

"Sixteen."

"But the fact that you have changed your room shows that you feared some one would attack you. Whom had you in mind? An enemy living in the house? One of your servants? Or people from the outside? In that case, how could they get in? The whole question lies in that."

"Tomorrow, tomorrow," replied Fauville obstinately. "I will explain everything tomorrow——"

"Why not tonight?" Perenna persisted.

"Because I want proofs, I tell you . . . Because the mere fact of my talking may have terrible consequences . . . And I am frightened, yes, I'm frightened——"

He was trembling, in fact, and looked so wretched and terrified that Don Luis insisted no longer.

"Very well," he said. "I will only ask your permission, for my comrade and myself, to spend the night where we can hear you if you call."

"As you please, Monsieur. Perhaps, after all, that will be best."

AT THAT moment one of the servants knocked and came in to say that his mistress wished to see the master before she went out. Madame Fauville entered almost immediately. She bowed pleasantly as Perenna and Mazeroux arose from their chairs.

She was a woman between thirty and thirty-five, a woman of a bright and smiling beauty, which she owed to her blue eyes, to

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her wavy hair, to all the charm of her rather vapid, but amiable and very pretty, face. She wore a long figured-silk cloak over an evening dress that showed her fine shoulders.

Her husband said in surprise—

"Are you going out tonight?"

"You forget," she said. "The Auverards offered me a seat in their box at the Opera; and you yourself asked me to look in at Mme. d'Ersingen's party afterward——"

"So I did, so I did," he said. "It escaped my memory; I am working so hard."

She finished buttoning her gloves and asked—

"Won't you come and fetch me at Mme. d'Ersingen's?"

"What for?"

"They would like it."

"But I shouldn't. Besides, I don't feel well enough."

"Then I'll make your apologies for you."

"Yes, do."

She drew her cloak around her with a graceful gesture, and stood for a few moments without moving, as if seeking a word of farewell. Then she said:

"Edmond's not here! I thought he was working with you."

"He was feeling tired."

"Is he asleep?"

"Yes."

"I wanted to kiss him good night."

"No, you would only wake him. And here's your car; so go, dear. Amuse yourself."

"Oh, amuse myself!" she said. "There's not much amusement about the Opera and an evening party."

"Still, it's better than keeping one's room."

There was some little constraint. It was obviously one of those ill assorted households in which the husband, suffering in health and not caring for the pleasures of society, stays at home, while the wife seeks the enjoyments to which her age and habits entitle her.

As he said nothing more, she bent over and kissed him on the forehead. Then, once more bowing to the two visitors, she went out. A moment later they heard the sound of the motor driving away.

Hippolyte Fauville at once arose and rang the bell. Then he said:

"No one here has any idea of the danger hanging over me. I have confided in nobody, not even in Silvestre, my own man though he has been in my service for years and is honesty itself."

The man servant entered.

"I am going to bed, Silvestre," said M Fauville. "Get everything ready."

Silvestre opened the upper part of the great sofa, which made a comfortable bed and laid the sheets and blankets. Next, at his master's orders, he brought a jug of water, a glass, a plate of biscuits and a dish of fruit.

M. Fauville ate a couple of biscuits and then cut a dessert-apple. It was not ripe. He took two others, felt them and, not thinking them good, put them back as well. Then he peeled a pear and ate it.

"You can leave the fruit-dish," he said to his man. "I shall be glad of it, if I am hungry during the night. . . . Oh, I was forgetting! These two gentlemen are staying. Don't mention it to anybody. And, in the morning, don't come until I ring."

The man placed the fruit-dish on the table before retiring. Perenna, who was noticing everything and who was afterward to remember every smallest detail of that evening, which his memory recorded with a sort of mechanical faithfulness, counted three pears and four apples in the dish.

Meanwhile Fauville went up the winding staircase and, going along the gallery, reached the room where his son lay in bed.

"He's fast asleep," he said to Perenna, who had joined him.

The bedroom was a small one. The air was admitted by a special system of ventilation, for the dormer window was hermetically closed by a wooden shutter tightly nailed down.

"I took the precaution last year," Hippolyte Fauville explained. "I used to make my electrical experiments in this room and was afraid of being spied upon, so I closed the aperture opening on the roof."

And he added, in a low voice—

"They have been prowling around me for a long time."

The two men went downstairs again.

Fauville looked at his watch.

"A quarter past ten; bed-time. I am exceedingly tired and you will excuse me—"

IT WAS arranged that Perenna and Mazeroux should make themselves comfortable in a couple of easy chairs which they carried into the passage

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between the study and the entrance hall. But, before bidding them good night, Hippolyte Fauville, who, although greatly excited, had appeared until then to retain his self-control, was seized with a sudden attack of weakness. He uttered a faint cry. Don Luis turned around and saw the sweat pouring like gleaming water down his face and neck, while he shook with fever and anguish.

"What's the matter?" asked Perenna.

"I'm frightened . . . I'm frightened!" he said.

"This is madness!" cried Don Luis. "Aren't we here, the two of us? We can easily spend the night with you, if you prefer, by your bedside."

Fauville replied by shaking Perenna violently by the shoulder and, with distorted features, stammering:

"If there were ten of you . . . if there were twenty of you with me, you need not think that it would spoil their schemes! They can do anything they please; do you hear? Anything! . . . They have already killed Inspector Vérot . . . They will kill me . . . and they will kill my son. . . Oh, the blackguards! . . . My God, take pity on me! . . . The awful terror of it! . . . The pain I suffer!"

He had fallen on his knees and was striking his breast and repeating:

"O God, have pity on me! . . . I can't die! . . . I can't let my son die! . . . Have pity on me, I beseech Thee!"

He sprang to his feet and led Perenna to a glass-fronted case, which he rolled back on its brass castors, revealing a small safe built into the wall.

"You will find my whole story here, written up day by day for the past three years. If anything should happen to me, revenge will be easy."

He hurriedly turned the letters of the padlock and, with a key which he took from his pocket, opened the safe.

It was three fourths empty; but on one of the shelves, between some piles of papers, was a diary bound in drab cloth, with a rubber band around it. He took the diary and, emphasizing his words, said:

"There, look! It's all in here. With this, the hideous business can be reconstructed. . . . There are my suspicions first and then my certainties. . . . Everything, everything . . . How to trap them and how to do for them. . . . You'll remember, won't you? A diary bound in drab cloth. . . . I'm putting it back in the safe."

Gradually his calmness returned. He pushed back the glass case, tidied a few papers, switched on the electric lamp above his bed, put out the lights in the middle of the ceiling, and asked Don Luis and Mazeroux to leave him.

Don Luis, who was walking around the room and examining the iron shutters of the two windows, noticed a door opposite the entrance door and asked the engineer about it.

"I use it for my regular clients," said Fauville. "And sometimes I go out that way."

"Does it open on the garden?"

"Yes."

"Is it properly closed?"

"You can see for yourself; it's locked and bolted with a safety bolt. Both keys are on my bunch; so is the key of the garden gate."

He placed the bunch of keys on the table, with his pocket-book and, after first winding it, his watch.

Don Luis, without troubling to ask permission, took the keys and unfastened the lock and the bolt. A flight of three steps brought him to the garden. He followed the length of the narrow border. Through the ivy he saw and heard the two policemen pacing up and down the boulevard. He tried the lock of the gate. It was fastened.

"Everything's all right," he said when he returned, "and you can be easy. Good night."

"Good night," said the engineer, seeing Perenna and Mazeroux out.

Between his study and the passage were two doors, one of which was padded and covered with American cloth. On the other side the passage was separated from the hall by a heavy curtain.

"You can go to sleep," said Perenna to his companion. "I'll sit up."

"But surely, chief, you don't think that anything's going to happen!"

"I don't think so, seeing the precautions which we've taken. But, knowing Inspector Vérot as you did, do you think he was the man to imagine things?"

"No, chief."

"Well, you know what he prophesied. That means that he had his reasons for doing so. And therefore I shall keep my eyes open."

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"We'll take it in turns, chief; wake me when it's my time to watch."

Seated motionlessly side by side, they exchanged an occasional remark. Soon afterward Mazeroux fell asleep. Don Luis remained in his chair without moving, his ears pricked up. Everything was quiet in the house. Outside, from time to time, the sound of a motor-car or of a cab rolled by. He could also hear the late trains on the Auteuil line.

He arose several times and went up to the door. Not a sound. Hippolyte Fauville was evidently asleep.

"Excellent!" said Perenna to himself. "The Boulevard is watched. No one can enter the room except by this way. So there is nothing to fear."

AT TWO o'clock in the morning a car stopped outside the house and one of the men servants, who must have been waiting in the kitchen, hastened to the front door. Perenna switched off the light in the passage and, drawing the curtain slightly aside, saw Mme. Fauville enter, followed by Silvestre.

She went up. The lights on the staircase were put out. For half an hour or so, there was a sound overhead of voices and of chairs moving. Then all was silence.

And, amid this silence, Perenna felt an unspeakable anguish arise within him, he could not tell why. But it was so violent, the impression became so acute, that he muttered:

"I shall go and see if he's asleep. I don't expect that he has bolted the doors."

He had only to push both doors to open them; and, with his electric lantern in his hand, he went up to the bed.

Hippolyte Fauville was sleeping with his face turned to the wall.

Perenna gave a smile of relief. He returned to the passage and, shaking Mazeroux—

"Your turn, Alexandre."

"No news, chief?"

"No, none; he's asleep."

"How do you know?"

"I've had a look at him."

"That's funny; I never heard you. It's true, though, I've slept like a pig."

He followed Perenna into the study; and Perenna said:

"Sit down and don't wake him. I shall take forty winks."

He had one more turn at sentry duty. But, even while dozing, he remained conscious of all that happened around him. A clock struck the hours with a low chime; and, each time, Perenna counted the strokes. Then came the life outside awakening, the rattle of the milk-carts, the whistle of the early suburban trains.

People began to stir inside the house. The daylight trickled in through the crannies of the shutters; and the room gradually became filled with light.

"Let's go away," said Sergeant Mazeroux. "It would be better for him not to find us here."

"Hold your tongue," said Don Luis with an imperious gesture.

"Why?"

"You'll wake him up."

"But you can see I'm not waking him," said Mazeroux, without lowering his tone.

"That's true, that's true," whispered Don Luis, astonished that the sound of that voice had not disturbed the sleeper.

And he felt himself overcome with the same anguish that had seized upon him in the middle of the night, a more clearly defined anguish, although he would not, although he dared not try to realize the reason of it.

"What's the matter with you, chief? You're looking like nothing on earth. What is it?"

"Nothing . . . Nothing. . . . I'm frightened . . . ."

Mazeroux shuddered.

"Frightened of what? You say that just as he did last night."

"Yes . . . yes . . . and for the same reason."

"But——"

"Don't you understand? . . . Don't you understand that I'm wondering——?"

"No; what?"

"If he's not dead!"

"But you're mad, chief!"

"No. . . . I don't know. . . . Only, only . . . I have an impression of death——"

Lantern in hand, he stood as one paralyzed opposite the bed; and he who was afraid of nothing in the world had not the courage to throw the light on Hippolyte Fauville's face. A terrifying silence arose and filled the room.

"Oh, chief, he's not moving!"

"I know . . . I know . . . and I now see that he has not moved once during the

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night. And that's what frightens me."

He had to make a real effort in order to step forward. He was now almost touching the bed.

The engineer did not appear to breathe.

This time Perenna resolutely took hold of his hand.

It was icy cold.

Don Luis at once recovered all his self-possession:

"The window! Open the window!" he cried.

And, when the light flooded the room, he saw the face of Hippolyte Fauville all swollen, stained with brown patches.

"Oh!" he said under his breath. "He's dead!"

"Confound it all! . . . Confound it all!" spluttered the detective-sergeant.

For two or three minutes Mazeroux stood petrified, stupefied, staggered at the sight of this most astonishing and mysterious phenomenon. Then a sudden idea made Perenna start. He flew up the winding staircase, rushed along the gallery and darted into the attic.

Edmond, Hippolyte Fauville's son, lay stiff and stark on his bed, with a cadaverous face, dead too.

"Confound it all! . . . Confound it all!" repeated Mazeroux.

Never, perhaps, in the course of his adventurous career, had Perenna experienced such a knock-down blow. It gave him a feeling of extreme lassitude, depriving him of all power of speech or movement. Father and son were dead! They had been killed during that night! A few hours earlier, though the house was watched and every outlet hermetically closed, both had been poisoned by an infernal puncture, even as Inspector Vérot was poisoned, even as Cosmo Mornington was poisoned!

"Confound it all!" said Mazeroux once more. "It was not worth troubling about the poor devils and performing such miracles to save them!"

The exclamation conveyed a reproach. Perenna grasped it and admitted—

"You are right, Mazeroux; I was not equal to the job."

"Nor I, chief."

"You . . . you have only been in this business since yesterday evening——"

"Well, so have you, chief!"

"Yes, I know, since yesterday evening, whereas the others have been working at it for weeks and weeks. . . . But, all the same, these two are dead; and I was there; I, Lupin, was there! . . . The thing has been done under my eyes; and I saw nothing! I saw nothing! How is it possible?"

He uncovered the poor boy's shoulders, showing the mark of a puncture at the top of the arm.

"The same mark . . . the same mark obviously that we shall find on the father. . . . The lad does not seem to have suffered either. . . . Poor little chap! He did not look very strong. . . . Never mind, it's a nice face: what a terrible blow for his mother when she learns!"

The detective-sergeant wept with anger and pity, while he kept on mumbling—

"Confound it all! . . . Confound it all!——"

"We shall revenge them; eh, Mazeroux?"

"Rather, chief! Twice over!"

"Once will do, Mazeroux. But it shall be done with a will."

"That I swear it shall!"

"You're right; let's swear. Let us swear that this dead pair shall be avenged. Let us swear not to lay down our arms until the murderers of Hippolyte Fauville and his son are punished as they deserve."

"I swear it as I hope to be saved, chief."

"Good," said Perenna. "And now to work. You go and telephone at once to the police office. I am sure that M. Desmalions will approve of your informing him without delay. He takes an immense interest in the case."

"And, if the servants come? If Mme. Fauville——"

"No one will come till we open the doors; and we sha'n't open them except to the Prefect of Police. It will be for him, afterward, to tell Mme. Fauville that she is a widow and that she has no son. Go, hurry!"

"One moment, chief; we are forgetting something that will help us enormously."

"What's that?"

"The little drab-cloth diary in the safe, in which M. Fauville describes the plot against him."

"Why, of course!" said Perenna. "You're right . . . especially as he omitted to mix up the letters of the lock last night and the key is on the bunch which he left lying on the table."

They ran down the stairs.

"Leave this to me," said Mazeroux. "It's

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more regular that you shouldn't touch the safe."

He took the bunch, moved the glass case and inserted the key, with a feverish emotion which Don Luis felt even more acutely than he did. They were at last about to know the details of the mysterious story. The dead man himself would betray the secret of his murderers.

"Lord, what a time you take!" growled Don Luis.

Mazeroux plunged both hands into the crowd of papers that encumbered the iron shelf.

"Well, Mazeroux, hand it over."

"What?"

"The diary."

"I can't, chief."

"What's that?"

"It's gone."

Don Luis stifled an oath. The drab-cloth diary, which the engineer had placed in the safe before their eyes, had disappeared.

Mazeroux shook his head.

"Confound it all! So they knew about that diary!"

"Of course they did; and they knew plenty of other things besides. We've not seen the end of it with those fellows. There's no time to lose. Ring up."

Mazeroux did so and soon received the answer that M. Desmalions was coming to the telephone. He waited.

IN A FEW minutes Perenna, who had been walking up and down, examining different objects in the room, came and sat down beside Mazeroux. He seemed thoughtful. He reflected for some time. But then, his eyes falling on the fruit-dish, he muttered:

"Hullo! There are only three apples, instead of four. Then he ate the fourth."

"Yes," said Mazeroux, "he must have eaten it."

"That's funny," replied Perenna, "for he didn't think them ripe."

He was silent once more, sat leaning his elbows on the table, visibly preoccupied; then, raising his head, he let fall these words—

"The murder was committed before we entered the room, at half-past twelve exactly."

"How do you know, chief?"

"M. Fauville's murderer or murderers, in touching the things on the table, knocked down the watch which M. Fauville had placed there. They put it back; but the fall had stopped it. And it stopped at half-past twelve."

"Then, chief, when we settled ourselves here, at two in the morning, it was a corpse that was lying beside us and another over our heads?"

"Yes."

"But how did those devils get in?"

"Through this door, which opens on the garden, and through the gate that opens on the Boulevard Suchet."

"Then they had keys to the locks and bolts?"

"False keys, yes."

"But the policemen watching the house outside?"

"They are still watching it, as that sort watch a house, walking from point to point without thinking that people can slip into a garden while they have their backs turned. That's what took place in coming and going."

Sergeant Mazeroux seemed flabbergasted. The criminals' daring, their skill, the precision of their acts bewildered him.

"They're mighty clever," he said.

"Mighty clever, Mazeroux, as you say; and I foresee a tremendous battle. By Jupiter, with what a vim they set to work!"

The telephone-bell rang. Don Luis left Mazeroux to his conversation with the Prefect and, taking the bunch of keys, easily unfastened the lock and the bolt of the door and went out into the garden, in the hope of there finding some trace that should facilitate his quest.

As on the day before, he saw, through the ivy, two policemen walking between one lamp-post and the next. They did not see him. Moreover, anything that might happen inside the house appeared to be to them a matter of total indifference.

"That's my great mistake," said Perenna to himself. "It doesn't do to entrust a job to people who do not suspect its importance."

His investigations led to the discovery of some traces of footsteps on the gravel; traces not sufficiently plain to enable him to distinguish the shape of the shoes that had left them, yet distinct enough to confirm his supposition. The scoundrels had been that way!

Suddenly he gave a movement of delight. Against the border of the path, among the

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leaves of a little clump of rhododendrons, he saw something red, the shape of which at once struck him. He stooped. It was an apple, the fourth apple, the one whose absence from the fruit-dish he had noticed!

"Excellent!" he said. "Hippolyte Fauville did not eat it. One of them must have carried it away—a fit of appetite, a sudden hunger—and it must have rolled from his hand without his having time to look for it and pick it up."

He took up the fruit and examined it.

"What!" he exclaimed, with a start. "Can it be possible?"

He stood dumfounded, a prey to real excitement, refusing to admit the inadmissible thing which nevertheless presented itself to his eyes with the direct evidence of actuality. Some one had bitten into the apple; into the apple which was too sour to eat. And the teeth had left their mark!

"IS IT possible?" repeated Don Luis. "Is it possible that one of them can have been guilty of such an imprudence! The apple must have fallen without his knowing . . . or he must have been unable to find it in the dark."

He could not get over his surprise. He cast about for plausible explanations. But the fact was there before him. Two rows of teeth, cutting through the thin red peel, had left their regular, semicircular bite clearly in the pulp of the fruit. They were clearly marked on the top, while the lower row had melted into a single curved line.

"The teeth of the tiger!" murmured Perenna, who could not remove his eyes from that double imprint. "The teeth of the tiger! The teeth that had already left their mark on Inspector Vérot's piece of chocolate! What a coincidence! It can hardly be fortuitous. Must it not be taken as certain that the same person bit into this apple and into that cake of chocolate which Inspector Vérot brought to the police office as an incontestable piece of evidence?"

He hesitated a second. Should he keep this evidence for himself, for the personal inquiry which he meant to conduct? Or should he surrender it to the investigations of the police? But the touch of the object filled him with such repugnance, with such a sense of physical discomfort, that he flung away the apple and sent it rolling under the leaves of the shrubs.

And he repeated to himself:

"The teeth of the tiger! . . . The teeth of the wild beast!"

He locked the garden door behind him, bolted it, put back the keys on the table and said to Mazeroux—

"Have you spoken to the Chief of Police?"

"Yes."

"Is he coming?"

"Yes."

"Didn't he order you to telephone for the Commissary of Police?"

"No."

"That means that he wants to see everything by himself. So much the better. But the detective office? The Public Prosecutor?"

"He's told them."

"What's the matter with you, Alexandre? I have to drag your answers out of you. Well, what is it? You're looking at me very queerly. What's up?"

"Nothing."

"That's all right. I expect this business has turned your head. And no wonder. . . . The Prefect won't enjoy himself either . . . especially as he put his faith in me a bit light-heartedly and will be called upon to give an explanation of my presence here. By the way, it's much better that you should take upon yourself the responsibility for all that we have done. Don't you agree? Besides, it'll do you all the good in the world.

"Put yourself forward, flatly; suppress me as much as you can; and above all—I don't suppose that you will have any objection to this little detail—don't be such a fool as to say that you went to sleep for a single second, last night, in the passage. First of all, you'd only be blamed for it. And then . . . Well, that's understood, eh? So we have only to say good-by.

"If the Prefect wants me, as I expect he will, telephone to my address, Place du Palais-Bourbon. I shall be there. Good-by. It is not necessary for me to assist at the inquiry; my presence would be out of place. Good-by, old fellow."

He turned toward the door of the passage.

"Half a moment!" cried Mazeroux.

"Half a moment? . . . What do you mean?"

The detective sergeant had flung himself between Lupin and the door and was blocking his way:

"Yes, half a moment . . . I am not of

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your opinion. It's far better that you should wait until the Prefect comes."

"But I don't care a hang about your opinion!"

"May be; but you sha'n't pass."

"What! Why, Alexandre, you must be ill!"

"Look here, chief!" said Mazeroux feebly. "What can it matter to you? It's only natural that the Prefect should wish to speak to you."

"Ah, it's the Prefect who wishes, is it? . . . Well, my lad, you can tell him that I am not at his orders, that I am at nobody's orders, and that if the President of the Republic, if Napoleon the First himself were to bar my way. . . . Besides, rats! Enough said. Get out of the road."

"You shall not pass!" declared Mazeroux, in a resolute tone, extending his arms.

"Well, I like that!"

"You shall not pass."

"Alexandre, just count ten."

"A hundred, if you like, but you shall not——"

"Oh, blow your catchwords! Get out of this!"

Lupin seized Mazeroux by both shoulders, made him spin around on his heels and, with a push, sent him floundering over the sofa. Then he opened the door.

"Halt, or I fire!" It was Mazeroux, who had scrambled to his feet and now stood with his revolver in his hand and a determined expression on his face.

Don Luis stopped in amazement. The threat was absolutely indifferent to him; and the barrel of that revolver aimed at him left him as cold as could be. But by what prodigy did Mazeroux, his former accomplice, his ardent disciple, his devoted servant—by what prodigy did Mazeroux dare to act as he was doing?

Perenna went up to him and pressed gently on the detective's outstretched arm.

"Prefect's orders?" he asked.

"Yes," muttered the sergeant uncomfortably.

"Orders to keep me here until he comes?"

"Yes."

"And if I betrayed an intention of leaving, to prevent me?"

"Yes."

"By every means?"

"Yes."

"Even by putting a bullet through my skin?"

"Yes."

Perenna reflected; and then, in a serious voice—

"Would you have fired, Mazeroux?"

The sergeant lowered his head and said faintly—

"Yes, chief."

Perenna looked at him without anger, with a glance of affectionate sympathy; and it was an absorbing sight for him to see his former companion dominated by such a sense of discipline and duty. Nothing could prevail against that sense; not even the fierce admiration, the almost animal attachment, which Mazeroux retained for his master.

"I'm not angry, Mazeroux. In fact, I approve. Only you must tell me the reason why the Prefect of Police——"

The detective did not reply, but his eyes wore an expression of such sadness that Don Luis started, suddenly understanding the situation.

"No!" he cried. "No! . . . It's absurd . . . He can't have thought that! . . . And you, Mazeroux: do you believe me guilty?"

"Oh, I, chief, am as sure of you as I am of myself! . . . You don't take life! . . . But, all the same, there are things . . . coincidences——"

"Things . . . coincidences . . ." repeated Don Luis slowly.

He remained pensive; and in a low voice he said:

"Yes, after all, there's truth in what you say. . . . Yes, it all fits in. . . . Why didn't I think of it? . . . My relations with Cosmo Mornington, my arrival in Paris in time for the reading of the will, my insisting on spending the night here, the fact that the death of the two Fauvilles undoubtedly gives me the millions. . . . And then . . . And then . . . Why, he's absolutely right, your Prefect of Police! . . . All the more so as. . . . Well, there, I'm a goner!"

"Come, come, chief!"

"A dead-goner, old fellow; you just get that into your head. Not as Arsène Lupin, ex-burglar, ex-convict, ex-anything you please—I'm unattackable on that ground—but as Don Luis Perenna, respectable man, residuary legatee and the rest of it. And it's too stupid! For, after all, who will find the murderers of Cosmo, Vérot and the two Fauvilles, if they go clapping me into jail?"

"Come, come, chief——"

"Shut up! . . . Listen!"

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A motor-car was stopping on the boulevard, followed by another. It was evidently the Prefect and the magistrates from the Public Prosecutor's office.

Don Luis took Mazeroux by the arm.

"There's only one way out of it, Alexandre! Don't say you went to sleep."

"I must, chief."

"You silly ass!" growled Don Luis. "How is it possible to be such an ass! It's enough to disgust one with honesty. What am I to do, then?"

"Discover the culprit, chief."

"What! . . . What are you talking about?"

Mazeroux, in his turn, took Lupin by the arm and, clutching him with a sort of despair, said, in a voice choked with tears:

"Discover the culprit, chief. If not, you're done for . . . That's certain . . . The Prefect told me so. . . . The police want a culprit . . . They want him this evening. . . . One has got to be found. . . . It's up to you to find him."

"What you have, Alexandre, is a merry wit."

"It's child's play for you, chief. You have only to set your mind to it."

"But there's not the least clue, you ass!"

"You'll find one . . . You must . . . I entreat you, hand them over somebody. . . . It would be more than I could bear if you were arrested. You, the chief, accused of murder! No, no. . . . I entreat you, discover the criminal and hand him over. . . . You have the whole day to do it in . . . And Lupin has done greater things than that!"

He was stammering, weeping, wringing his hands, grimacing with every feature of his comic face. And it was really touching, this grief, this dismay, at the approach of the danger that threatened his master.

M. Desmalions' voice was heard in the hall, through the curtain that closed the passage. A third motor-car stopped on the Boulevard, and a fourth, both doubtless laden with policemen.

The house was surrounded, besieged.

Perenna was silent.

Beside him, anxious-faced, Mazeroux seemed to be imploring him.

A few seconds elapsed.

Then Perenna declared deliberately:

"Looking at things all-round, Alexandre, I admit that you have seen the position clearly and that your fears are fully justified. If I do not manage to hand over the murderer or murderers of Hippolyte Fauville and his son to the police in a few hours from now, it is I, Don Luis Perenna, who will be lodged in durance vile on the evening of this Thursday, the first of April."

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CLOUDED TURQUOISE

IT WAS about nine o'clock in the morning when the Prefect of Police entered the study in which the incomprehensible tragedy of that double murder had been enacted.

He did not even bow to Don Luis; and the magistrates who accompanied him might have thought that Don Luis was merely an assistant of Sergeant Mazeroux, if the Chief Detective had not made it his business to tell them, in a few words, the part played by the stranger.

M. Desmalions briefly examined the two corpses and received a rapid explanation from Mazeroux. Then, returning to the hall, he went up to a drawing-room on the first floor, where Mme. Fauville, who had been informed of his visit, joined him almost at once.

Perenna, who had not stirred from the passage, slipped into the hall himself. The servants of the house, who by this time had heard of the murder, were crossing it in every direction. He went down the few stairs leading to a ground-floor landing, on which the front door opened.

There were two men there, of whom one said—

"You can't pass."

"But——"

"You can't pass; those are our orders."

"Your orders? Who gave them?"

"The Prefect himself."

"No luck," said Perenna, laughing. "I have been up all night and I am starving. Is there no way of getting something to eat?"

The two policemen exchanged glances and one of them beckoned to Silvestre and spoke to him. Silvestre went toward the dining-room and returned with a horseshoe roll.

"Good!" thought Don Luis, after thanking him. "This settles it. I'm nabbed. That's what I wanted to know. But M. Desmalions is deficient in logic. For, if it's

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Arsène Lupin whom he means to detain here, all these worthy plain-clothes men are hardly enough; and, if it's Don Luis Perenna, they are superfluous, because the flight of Master Perenna would deprive Master Perenna of every chance of seeing the color of my poor Cosmo's shekels. Having said which, I will take a chair."

He resumed his seat in the passage and awaited events.

Through the open door of the study he saw the magistrates pursuing their investigations. The divisional surgeon made a first examination of the two bodies and at once recognized the same symptoms of poisoning as those which he himself had perceived the evening before on the corpse of Inspector Vérot.

Next the detectives took up the bodies and carried them to the adjoining bedrooms which the father and son formerly occupied on the second floor of the house. The Prefect of Police then came downstairs; and Don Luis heard him say to the magistrates:

"Poor woman! She refused to understand. . . . When at last she understood, she fell to the ground in a dead faint. Only think, her husband and her son at one blow! . . . Poor thing!"

From that moment Perenna heard and saw nothing. The door was shut. The Prefect must afterward have given some order through the outside, through the communication with the front door offered by the garden, for the two detectives came and took up their positions in the hall at the entrance to the passage, on the right and left of the dividing curtain.

"One thing's certain," thought Don Luis. "My stock is not booming. What a state Alexandre must be in! Oh, what a state!"

At twelve Silvestre brought him some food on a tray. And the wait began anew.

In the study and in the house, the inquiry, which had been adjourned for lunch, was resumed. Perenna heard footsteps and the sound of voices on every side. At last, feeling tired and bored, he leaned back in his chair and fell asleep.

IT WAS four o'clock when Sergeant Mazeroux came and awaked him. As he led Lupin to the study Mazeroux whispered—

"Well, have you discovered him?"

"Whom?"

"The murderer."

"Of course!" said Perenna. "It's as easy as shelling peas!"

"That's a good thing!" said Mazeroux, greatly relieved and failing to see the sarcasm. "But for that, as you saw for yourself, you would have been done for."

Don Luis entered. In the room were the Public Prosecutor, the examining magistrate, the Chief Detective, the local Commissary of Police, two inspectors, and three constables in uniform.

Outside, on the Boulevard Suchet, shouts were raised; and, when the Commissary and his three policemen went out, by the Prefect's orders, to listen to the crowd, the hoarse voice of a newsboy was heard shouting:

"The double murder on the Boulevard Suchet! . . . Full particulars of the death of Inspector Vérot! . . . The police at a loss!——"

Then, when the door was closed, all was silent.

"Mazeroux was quite right," thought Don Luis. "It's I or the other one; that's clear. Unless the words that will be spoken and the facts that will come to light in the course of this examination supply me with some clue that will enable me to give them the name of that mysterious *x*, they'll surrender me this evening for the public to batten on.

"Attention, Lupin, old fellow; the great game is about to commence!"

He felt that thrill of delight which always ran through him at the approach of the great struggles. This one, indeed, might be numbered among the most terrible that he had yet sustained.

He knew the Prefect's reputation, his experience, his tenacity and the keen pleasure which he took in conducting important inquiries and in personally pushing them to a conclusion before placing them in the magistrate's hands; and he also knew all the professional qualities of the Chief Detective, and all the subtlety, all the penetrating logic, all the cross-questioning tricks, possessed by the examining magistrate.

The Prefect of Police himself directed the attack. He did so in a straightforward fashion, without beating about the bush, and in a rather harsh voice, which had lost its former tone of sympathy for Don Luis. His attitude also was more formal and lacked that geniality which had struck Don Luis on the previous day.

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"Monsieur," he said, "circumstances having brought it about that, as the residuary legatee and representative of Mr. Cosmo Mornington, you spent the night on this ground floor while a double murder was being committed here, we wish to receive your detailed evidence as to the different incidents that occurred last night."

"In other words, Monsieur le Préfet," said Perenna, replying directly to the attack, "in other words, circumstances having brought it about that you authorized me to spend the night here, you would like to know if my evidence corresponds at all points with that of Sergeant Mazeroux."

"Yes."

"Meaning that the part played by myself strikes you as suspicious?"

M. Desmalions hesitated. His eyes met Don Luis' eyes; and he was visibly impressed by the other's frank glance. Nevertheless he replied, plainly and bluntly.

"It is not for you to ask me questions, Monsieur."

Don Luis bowed.

"I am at your orders, Monsieur le Préfet."

"Please tell us what you know."

Don Luis thereupon gave a minute account of events, after which M. Desmalions reflected for a few moments and said:

"There is one point on which we want to be informed. When you entered this room at half past two this morning and sat down beside M. Fauville, was there nothing to tell you that he was dead?"

"Nothing, Monsieur le Préfet. Otherwise Sergeant Mazeroux and I would have given the alarm."

"Was the garden door shut?"

"It must have been, as we had to unlock it at seven o'clock."

"With what?"

"With the key on the bunch."

"But how could the murderers, coming from the outside, have opened it?"

"With false keys."

"Have you a proof which allows you to suppose that it was opened with false keys?"

"No, Monsieur le Préfet."

"Therefore, until we have proofs to the contrary, we are bound to believe that it was not opened from the outside and that the criminal was inside the house."

"But, Monsieur le Préfet, there was no one here but Sergeant Mazeroux and myself!"

There was a silence, a pause whose meaning admitted of no doubt. M. Desmalions' next words gave it an even more precise value.

"You did not sleep during the night?"

"Yes, toward the end."

"You did not sleep before, while you were in the passage?"

"No."

"And Sergeant Mazeroux?"

Don Luis remained undecided for a moment; but how could he hope that the honest and scrupulous Mazeroux had disobeyed the dictates of his conscience?

He replied—

"Sergeant Mazeroux went to sleep in his chair and did not wake until Mme. Fauville returned, two hours later."

There was a fresh silence, which evidently meant—

"So, during the two hours when Sergeant Mazeroux was asleep, it was physically possible for you to open the door and kill the two Fauvilles."

The examination was taking the course which Perenna had foreseen; and the circle was drawing closer and closer around him. His adversary was conducting the contest with a logic and vigor which he admired without reserve.

"By Jove!" he thought. "How difficult it is to defend one's self when one is innocent! There's my right wing and my left wing driven in. Will my center be able to stand the assault?"

M. Desmalions, after a whispered colloquy with the examining magistrate, resumed his questions in these terms—

"Yesterday evening, when M. Fauville opened his safe in your presence and the sergeant's, what was in the safe?"

"A heap of papers, on one of the shelves; and, among those papers, the diary in drab cloth which has since disappeared."

"You did not touch those papers?"

"Neither the papers nor the safe, Monsieur le Préfet. Sergeant Mazeroux must have told you that he made me stand aside, to insure the regularity of the inquiry."

"So you never came into the slightest contact with the safe?"

"Not the slightest."

M. Desmalions looked at the examining magistrate and nodded his head. Had Perenna been able to doubt that a trap was



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being laid for him, a glance at Mazeroux would have told him all about it! Mazeroux was ashen-gray.

Meanwhile, M. Desmalions continued:

"You have taken part in inquiries, Monsieur—in police inquiries. Therefore, in putting my next question to you, I consider that I am addressing it to a tried detective."

"I will answer your question, Monsieur le Préfet, to the best of my ability."

"Here it is, then. Supposing that there were at this moment in the safe an object of some kind—a jewel, let us say; a diamond out of a tie-pin, and that this diamond had come from a tie-pin which belonged to somebody whom we knew, somebody who had spent the night in this house, what would you think of the coincidence?"

"There we are!" said Perenna to himself. "There's the trap. It's clear that they've found something in the safe and, next, that they imagine that this something belongs to me. Good! But, in that case, we must presume, as I have not touched the safe, that the thing was taken from me and put in the safe to compromise me. But I did not have a finger in this pie until yesterday; and it is impossible that, during last night, when I saw nobody, any one can have had time to prepare and contrive such a determined plot against me. So——"

The Prefect of Police interrupted this silent monologue by repeating—

"What would be your opinion?"

"There would be an undeniable connection between that person's presence in the house and the two crimes that had been committed."

"Consequently we should have the right at least to suspect the person?"

"Yes."

"That is your view?"

"Decidedly."

M. Desmalions produced a piece of tissue paper from his pocket and took from it a little blue stone, which he displayed.

"Here is a turquoise which we found in the safe. It belongs, without a shadow of a doubt, to the ring which you are wearing on your finger."

Don Luis was seized with a fit of rage. He half grated through his clenched teeth:

"Oh, the rascals! How clever they are! But no, I can't believe——"

He looked at his ring, which was formed of a large, clouded, dead turquoise, surrounded by a circle of small, irregular turquoises, also of a very pale blue. One of these was missing; and the one which M. Desmalions had in his hand fitted the place exactly.

"What do you say?" asked M. Desmalions.

"I say that this turquoise belongs to my ring, which was given me by Cosmo Mornington on the first occasion when I saved his life."

"So we are agreed?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Préfet, we are agreed."

DON LUIS PERENNA began to walk across the room, reflecting. The movement which the two detectives made toward the two doors told him that his arrest was provided for. A word from M. Desmalions, and Sergeant Mazeroux would be forced to take his chief by the collar.

Don Luis once more gave a glance toward his former accomplice. Mazeroux made a gesture of entreaty, as if to say:

"Well, what are you waiting for? Why don't you give up the criminal? Quick; it's time!"

Don Luis smiled.

"What's the matter?" asked the Prefect, in a tone that now entirely lacked the sort of involuntary politeness which he had shown since the commencement of the examination.

"The matter? . . . The matter?——"

Perenna seized a chair by the back, spun it around and sat down upon it, with the simple remark—

"Let's talk!"

And this was said in such a way and the movement executed with so much decision that the Prefect muttered, as if wavering, "I don't quite see——"

"You soon will, Monsieur le Préfet."

And, speaking in a slow voice, laying stress on every syllable that he uttered, he began:

"Monsieur le Préfet, the position is as clear as daylight. Yesterday evening, you gave me an authorization which involves your responsibility most gravely. The result is that what you now want, at all costs and without delay, is a culprit. And that culprit is to be myself. By way of incriminating evidence, you have the fact of my presence here, the fact that the door was locked on the inside, the fact that Sergeant

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Mazeroux was asleep while the crime was committed and the fact of the discovery of the turquoise in the safe. All this is crushing, I admit.

"Added to it," he continued, "we have the terrible presumption that I had every interest in the removal of M. Fauville and his son, inasmuch as, if there is no heir of Cosmo Mornington's in existence, I come into a hundred million francs. Exactly. There is therefore nothing for me to do, Monsieur le Préfet, but to go with you to the lock-up or else——"

"Or else what?"

"Or else hand over to you the criminal, the real criminal."

The Prefect of Police smiled and took out his watch.

"I'm waiting," he said.

"It will take me just an hour, Monsieur le Préfet, and no more, if you give me every latitude. And the search of the truth, it seems to me, is worth a little patience."

"I'm waiting," repeated M. Desmalions.

"Sergeant Mazeroux, please tell Silvestre, the man servant, that Monsieur le Préfet wishes to see him."

Upon a sign from M. Desmalions, Mazeroux went out.

Don Luis explained his motive.

"Monsieur le Préfet, whereas the discovery of the turquoise constitutes in your eyes an extremely serious proof against me, to me it is a revelation of the highest importance. I will tell you why. That turquoise must have fallen from my ring last evening and rolled on the carpet.

"Now there are only four persons," he continued, "who can have noticed this fall when it happened, picked up the turquoise and, in order to compromise the new adversary that I was, slipped it into the safe. The first of those four persons is one of your detectives, Sergeant Mazeroux, of whom we will not speak. The second is dead; I refer to M. Fauville. We will not speak of him. The third is Silvestre, the man servant. I should like to say a few words to him. I shall not take long."

Silvestre's examination, in fact, was soon over. He was able to prove that, pending the return of Mme. Fauville, for whom he had to open the door, he had not left the kitchen, where he was playing cards with the lady's maid and another man servant.

"Very well," said Perenna. "One word more. You must have read in this morning's papers of the death of Inspector Vérot and seen his portrait."

"Yes."

"Do you know Inspector Vérot?"

"No."

"Still, it is probable that he came here yesterday, during the day."

"I can't say," replied the servant. "M. Fauville used to receive many visitors through the garden and let them in himself."

"You have no more evidence to give?"

"No."

"Please tell Mme. Fauville that Monsieur le Préfet would be very much obliged if he could have a word with her."

Silvestre left the room.

THE examining magistrate and the Public Prosecutor had drawn nearer, in astonishment.

The Prefect exclaimed:

"What, Monsieur! You don't mean to pretend that Mme. Fauville is mixed up——"

"Monsieur le Préfet, Mme. Fauville is the fourth person who may have seen the turquoise drop out of my ring."

"And what then? Have we the right, in the absence of any real proof, to suppose that a woman can kill her husband, that a mother can poison her son?"

"I am supposing nothing, Monsieur le Préfet."

"Then——"

Don Luis made no reply. M. Desmalions did not conceal his irritation. However, he said:

"Very well; but I order you most positively to remain silent. What questions am I to put to Mme. Fauville?"

"One only, Monsieur le Préfet. Ask Mme. Fauville if she knows any one, apart from her husband, who is descended from the sisters Roussel."

"Why that question?"

"Because, if that descendant exists, it is not I who will inherit the millions, but he; and then it will be he and not I who would be interested in the removal of M. Fauville and his son."

"Of course, of course," muttered M. Desmalions. "But, even so, this new trail——"

Mme. Fauville entered as he was speaking. Her face remained charming and pretty in spite of the tears that had reddened her eyelids and impaired the freshness

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of her cheeks. But her eyes expressed the scare of terror; and the obsession of the tragedy imparted to all her attractive personality, to her gait and to her movements something feverish and spasmodic that was painful to look upon.

"Pray sit down, Madame," said the Prefect, speaking with the height of deference, "and forgive me for inflicting any additional emotion upon you. But time is precious; and we must do everything to make sure that the two victims whose loss you are mourning shall be revenged without delay."

Tears were still streaming from her beautiful eyes; and, with a sob, she stammered—

"If the police need me, Monsieur le Préfet——"

"Yes; it is a question of obtaining a few particulars. Your husband's mother is dead, is she not?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Préfet."

"Am I correct in saying that she came from Saint-Etienne and that her maiden name was Roussel?"

"Yes."

"Elisabeth Roussel?"

"Yes."

"Had your husband any brothers or sisters?"

"No."

"Therefore there is no descendant of Elisabeth Roussel living?"

"No."

"Very well. But Elisabeth Roussel had two sisters, did she not?"

"Yes."

"Ermeline Roussel, the elder, went abroad and was not heard of again. The other, the younger——"

"The other was called Armande Roussel. She was my mother."

"Eh? What do you say?"

"I said my mother's maiden name was Armande Roussel and I married my cousin, the son of Elisabeth Roussel."

THE statement had the effect of a thunderclap. So, upon the death of Hippolyte Fauville and his son Edmond, the direct descendants of the eldest sister, Cosmo Mornington's inheritance passed to the other branch, that of Armande Roussel; and this branch was represented so far by Mme. Fauville!

The Prefect of Police and the examining magistrate exchanged glances and both instinctively turned toward Don Luis Perenna, who did not move a muscle.

"Have you no brother or sister, Madame?" asked the Prefect.

"No, Monsieur le Préfet; I am the only child."

The only child! In other words, now that her husband and son were dead, Cosmo Mornington's millions reverted absolutely and undeniably to her, to her alone.

Meanwhile a hideous idea weighed like a nightmare upon the magistrates and they could not rid themselves of it: the woman sitting before them was the mother of Edmond Fauville. M. Desmalions had his eyes on Don Luis Perenna, who wrote a few words on a card and handed it to the Prefect.

M. Desmalions, who was gradually resuming toward Don Luis his courteous attitude of the day before, read it, reflected a moment and put this question to Mme. Fauville—

"What was your son Edmond's age?"

"Seventeen."

"You look so young——"

"Edmond was not my son but my stepson, the son of my husband by his first wife, who died."

"Ah! . . . So Edmond Fauville——" muttered the Prefect, without finishing his sentence.

In two minutes the whole situation had changed. In the eyes of the magistrates, Mme. Fauville was no longer the widow and mother who must on no account be attacked. She had suddenly become a woman whom circumstances compelled them to cross-examine. However prejudiced they might be in her favor, however charmed by the seductive qualities of her beauty, they were inevitably bound to ask themselves whether, for some reason or other—for instance, in order to be alone in the enjoyment of the enormous fortune—she had not had the madness to kill her husband and to kill the boy who was only her husband's son. In any case the question was there, calling for a solution.

The Prefect of Police continued—

"Do you know this turquoise?"

She took the stone which he held out to her and examined it without the least sign of confusion.

"No," she said. "I have an old-fashioned turquoise necklace, which I never wear; but

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the stones are larger and none of them has this irregular shape."

"We found this one in the safe," said M. Desmalions. "It forms part of a ring belonging to a person whom we know."

"Well," she said, eagerly, "you must find that person."

"He is here," said the Prefect, pointing to Don Luis, who had been standing some way off and who had not been noticed by Mme. Fauville.

She started at the sight of Perenna and cried very excitedly:

"But that gentleman was here yesterday evening! He was talking to my husband . . . and so was that other gentleman," she said, referring to Sergeant Mazeroux. "You must question them, find out why they were here. You understand that, if the turquoise belonged to one of them——"

The insinuation was direct, but clumsy; and it lent the greatest weight to Perenna's unspoken argument:

"The turquoise was picked up by some one who saw me yesterday and who wishes to compromise me. Apart from M. Fauville and the detective sergeant, only two people saw me: Silvestre, the man servant, and Mme. Fauville. Consequently, as Silvestre is outside the question, I accuse Mme. Fauville of putting the turquoise in the safe."

M. Desmalions asked—

"Will you let me see the necklace, Madame?"

"Certainly. It is with my other jewels, in my wardrobe. I will go for it."

"Pray don't trouble, Madame. Does your maid know the necklace?"

"Quite well."

"In that case Sergeant Mazeroux will tell her what is wanted."

NOT a word was spoken during the few minutes in which Mazeroux was absent. Mme. Fauville seemed absorbed in her grief. M. Desmalions kept his eyes fixed on her.

The sergeant returned, carrying a very large box containing a number of jewel-cases and loose ornaments.

M. Desmalions found the necklace, examined it and realized that indeed the stones did not resemble the turquoise and that none of them was missing. But, on separating two jewel-cases in order to take out a tiara which also contained blue stones, he made a gesture of surprise.

"What are these two keys?" he asked, pointing to two keys identical in shape and size with those which opened the lock and the bolt of the garden door.

Mme. Fauville remained very calm. Not a muscle of her face moved. Nothing pointed to the least perturbation on account of this discovery. She merely said:

"I don't know. They have been there a long time."

"Mazeroux," said M. Desmalions, "try them on that door."

Mazeroux did so. The door opened.

"Yes," said Mme. Fauville, "I remember now; my husband gave them to me. They were duplicates of his own keys——"

The words were uttered in the most natural tone and as if the speaker did not even suspect the terrible charge that was forming against her.

And nothing was more agonizing than this tranquillity. Was it a sign of absolute innocence, or the infernal craft of a criminal whom nothing could stir? Did she realize nothing of the tragedy which was taking place and of which she was the unconscious heroine? Or did she guess the terrible accusation which was gradually closing in upon her on every side and which threatened her with the most awful danger? But, in that case, how could she have been guilty of the extraordinary blunder of keeping those two keys?

A series of questions suggested itself to the minds of all those present. The Prefect of Police put them as follows—

"You were out, Madame, were you not, when the murders were committed?"

"Yes."

"You were at the Opera?"

"Yes; and I went on to a party at the house of one of my friends, Mme. d'Ersingen."

"Did your chauffeur drive you?"

"To the Opera, yes. But I sent him back to his garage; and he came to fetch me at the party."

"I see," said M. Desmalions. "But how did you go from the Opera to Mme. d'Ersingen's?"

For the first time, Mme. Fauville seemed to understand that she was the victim of a regular cross-examination; and her look and attitude betrayed a certain uneasiness. She replied—

"I took a motor cab."

"In the street?"

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"On the Place de l'Opéra," she murmured.

"At twelve o'clock, therefore?"

"No, at half-past eleven; I left before the Opera was over."

"You were in a hurry to get to your friend's?"

"Yes . . . Or rather——"

She stopped; her cheeks were scarlet; her lips and chin trembled; and she asked—

"Why do you ask me all these questions?"

"They are necessary, Madame. They may throw a light on what we want to know. I beg you therefore to answer them. At what time did you reach your friend's house?"

"I hardly know. . . . I did not notice the time."

"Did you go straight there?"

"Almost."

"How do you mean, 'almost'?"

"I had a little headache and told the driver to go up the Champs-Élysées and the Avenue du Bois . . . very slowly . . . and then down the Champs-Élysées again——"

She was becoming more and more embarrassed. Her voice grew indistinct. She lowered her head and was silent.

Certainly her silence contained no confession and there was nothing entitling any one to believe that her dejection was other than a consequence of her grief. But yet she seemed so weary as to give the impression that, feeling herself lost, she was giving up the fight. And it was almost a feeling of pity that was entertained for this woman against whom all the circumstances seemed to be conspiring and who defended herself so badly that her cross-examiner hesitated to press her yet further.

M. Desmalions in fact wore an irresolute air, as if the victory had been too easy and as if he had some scruple about pursuing it.

Mechanically he observed Perenna, who passed him a slip of paper, saying—

"Mme. d'Ersingen's telephone-number."

M. Desmalions murmured—

"Yes; true, they may know——"

And, taking down the receiver, he asked for number 325.04. He was connected at once and continued:

"Who is that speaking? . . . The butler? Ah! Is Mme. d'Ersingen at home? . . . No? . . . Or Monsieur? . . . Not he either? . . . Never mind, you can tell me what I want to know. I am M. Desmalions, the Prefect of Police, and I need certain information. At what time did Mme. Fauville come last night? . . . What do you say? . . . Are you sure? . . . At two o'clock in the morning? . . . Not before? . . . And she went away? . . . In ten minutes' time? . . . Good. . . . But you're certain you are not mistaken about the time when she arrived? I must know this positively; it is most important. . . . You say it was two o'clock in the morning? Two o'clock in the morning? . . . Very well. . . . Thank you."

When M. Desmalions turned around, he saw Mme. Fauville standing beside him and looking at him with an expression of mad anguish. And one and the same idea occurred to the mind of all the onlookers. They were in the presence either of an absolutely innocent woman or else of an exceptional actress whose face lent itself to the most perfect simulation of innocence.

"What do you want?" she stammered. "What does this mean? Explain yourself!"

Then M. Desmalions asked simply—

"What were you doing last night between half-past eleven in the evening and two o'clock in the morning?"

It was a terrifying question at the stage which the examination had reached; a fatal question, implying:

"If you can not give us an exact and strict account of the way in which you employed your time while the crime was being committed, we have the right to conclude that you were not alien to the murder of your husband and stepson——"

She understood it in this sense and staggered on her feet, moaning—

"It's horrible . . . horrible!"

The Prefect repeated:

"What were you doing? The question must be quite easy to answer."

"Oh," she cried in the same piteous tone, "how can you believe? . . . Oh, no, no, it's not possible! How can you believe?"

"I believe nothing yet," he said. "Besides, you can establish the truth with a single word."

It seemed, from the movement of her lips and the sudden gesture of resolution that shook her frame, as if she were about to speak that word. But all at once she appeared stupefied and dumfounded, pronounced a few unintelligible syllables and fell huddled into a chair, sobbing convulsively and uttering cries of despair.

It was tantamount to a confession. At

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the very least, it was a confession of her inability to supply the plausible explanation which would have put an end to the discussion.

The Prefect of Police moved away from her and spoke in a low voice to the examining magistrate and the Public Prosecutor. Perenna and Sergeant Mazeroux were left alone together, side by side.

Mazeroux whispered:

"What did I tell you? I knew you would find out! Oh, what a man you are! The way you managed!"

He was beaming at the thought that the chief was clear of the matter and that he had no more crows to pluck with his, Mazeroux's, superiors, whom he revered almost as much as he did the chief. Everybody was now agreed; they were "friends all 'round"; and Mazeroux was choking with delight.

"They'll lock her up, eh?"

"No," said Perenna. "There's not enough 'hold' on her for them to issue a warrant."

"What!" growled Mazeroux indignantly. "Not enough hold? I hope, in any case, that you won't let her go. She made no bones, you know, about attacking you! Come, chief, polish her off—a she-devil like that!"

Don Luis remained pensive. He was thinking of the unheard-of coincidences, the accumulation of facts that bore down on Mme. Fauville from every side. And the decisive proof which would join all these different facts together and give to the accusation the grounds which it still lacked was one which Perenna was able to supply. This was the marks of the teeth in the apple hidden among the shrubs in the garden. To the police these would be as good as any fingerprint, all the more as they could compare the marks with those on the cake of chocolate.

Nevertheless he hesitated. And, concentrating his anxious attention, he watched, with mingled feelings of pity and repulsion, that woman who, to all seeming, had killed her husband and her husband's son. Was he to give her the finishing stroke? Had he the right to play the part of judge? And supposing he were wrong?

MEANTIME, M. Desmalions had walked up to him and, while pretending to speak to Mazeroux, was really asking Perenna—

"What do you think of it?" Mazeroux shook his head. Perenna replied without hesitation—

"I think, Monsieur le Préfet, that, if this woman is guilty, she is defending herself, for all her cleverness, with inconceivable lack of skill."

"Meaning——?"

"Meaning that she was doubtless only a tool in the hands of an accomplice."

"An accomplice?"

"Remember, Monsieur le Préfet, her husband's exclamation in your office yesterday: 'Oh, the scoundrels, the scoundrels!' There is therefore at least one accomplice, who perhaps is the same as the man who was present, as Sergeant Mazeroux must have told you, in the Café du Pont-Neuf when Inspector Vérot was last there; a man with a reddish-brown beard, carrying an ebony walking-stick with a silver handle. So that——"

"So that," said M. Desmalions, completing the sentence, "by arresting Mme. Fauville today, merely on suspicion, we have a chance of laying our hands on the accomplice."

Perenna did not reply. The Prefect continued thoughtfully:

"Arrest her . . . arrest her. . . . We should need a proof for that. . . . Did you get no clue?"

"None at all, Monsieur le Préfet. True, my search was only summary."

"But ours was most minute. We have been through every corner of the room."

"And the garden, Monsieur le Préfet?"

"The garden also."

"With the same care?"

"Perhaps not. . . . But I think——"

"I think, on the contrary, Monsieur le Préfet, that, as the murderers passed through the garden in coming and going, there might be a chance——"

"Mazeroux," said M. Desmalions, "go outside and make a more thorough inspection."

The sergeant went out. Perenna, who was once more standing at one side, heard the Prefect of Police repeating to the examining magistrate:

"Ah, if we only had a proof, just one! The woman is evidently guilty. The presumption against her is too great! . . . And then there are Cosmo Mornington's millions. . . . But, on the other hand, look at her . . . Look at all the honesty in that

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pretty face of hers, look at all the sincerity of her grief."

She was still crying, with fitful sobs and starts of indignant protest that made her clench her fists. At one moment she took her tear-soaked handkerchief, bit it with her teeth and tore it, after the manner of certain actresses.

Perenna saw those beautiful white teeth, a little wide, moist and gleaming, rending the dainty cambric. And he thought of the marks of teeth on the apple. And he was seized with an extreme longing to know the truth. Was it the same pair of jaws that had left its impress in the pulp of the fruit?

Mazeroux returned. M. Desmalions moved briskly toward the sergeant, who showed him the apple which he had found under the ivy. And Perenna at once realized the supreme importance which the Prefect of Police attached to Mazeroux's explanations and to his unexpected discovery.

A conversation of some length took place between the magistrates and ended in the decision which Don Luis foresaw. M. Desmalions walked across the room to Mme. Fauville. It was the catastrophe. He reflected for a second on the manner in which he should open this final contest; and then he asked—

"Are you still unable, Madame, to tell us how you employed your time last night?"

She made an effort and whispered:

"Yes, yes. . . . I took a taxi and drove about. . . . I also walked a little——"

"That is a fact which we can easily verify when we have found the driver of the taxi. Meanwhile, there is an opportunity of removing the somewhat . . . grievous impression which your silence has left on our minds."

"I am quite ready——"

"It is this: the person or one of the persons who took part in the crime appears to have bitten into an apple which was afterward thrown away in the garden and which has just been found. To put an end to any suppositions concerning yourself, we should like you to perform the same action."

"Oh, certainly!" she cried eagerly. "If that is all you need to convince you——"

She took one of the three apples which Desmalions handed her from the dish and lifted it to her mouth.

It was a decisive act. If the two marks resembled each other, the proof existed, assured and undeniable.

Before completing her movement she stopped short, as if seized with a sudden fear. . . . Fear of what? Fear of the monstrous chance that might be her undoing? Or fear rather of the dread weapon which she was about to deliver against herself? In any case, nothing accused her with greater directness than this last hesitation, which was incomprehensible if she was innocent, but clear as day if she was guilty!

"What are you afraid of, Madame?" asked M. Desmalions.

"Nothing, nothing," she said, shuddering. "I don't know. . . . I am afraid of everything. . . . It is all so horrible——"

"But, Madame, I assure you that what we are asking of you has no sort of importance and, I am persuaded, can have only a fortunate result for you. If you don't mind, therefore——"

SHE raised her hand higher and yet higher, with a slowness that betrayed her uneasiness. And really, in the fashion in which things were happening, the scene was marked by a certain solemnity and tragedy that wrung every heart.

"And, if I refuse?" she asked suddenly.

"You are absolutely entitled to refuse," said the Prefect of Police. "But is it worth while, Madame? I am sure that your counsel would be the first to advise you——"

"My counsel?" she stammered, understanding the formidable meaning conveyed by that reply.

And suddenly, with a fierce resolve and the almost ferocious air that contorts the face when great dangers threaten, she made the movement which they were pressing her to make. She opened her mouth. They saw the gleam of the white teeth. At one bite the white teeth dug into the fruit.

"There you are, Monsieur," she said.

M. Desmalions turned to the examining magistrate.

"Have you the apple found in the garden?"

"Here, Monsieur le Préfet."

M. Desmalions put the two apples side by side.

And those who crowded around him, anxiously looking on, all uttered one exclamation.

The two marks of teeth were identical.

Identical! Certainly, before declaring the identity of every detail, the absolute analogy of the marks of each tooth, they must

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wait for the results of the expert's report. But there was one thing which there was no mistaking and that was the complete similarity of the two curves.

In either fruit, the rounded arch was bent according to the same inflection. The two semicircles could have fitted one into the other, both very narrow, both a little long-shaped and oval and of a restricted radius which was the very character of the jaw.

The men did not speak a word. M. Desmalions raised his head. Mme. Fauville did not move; she stood livid and mad with terror. But all the sentiments of terror, stupor and indignation that she might simulate with her mobile face and her immense gifts as an actress did not prevail against the compelling proof that presented itself to every eye.

The two imprints were identical! The same teeth had bitten into both apples!

"Madame——" the Prefect of Police began.

"No, no!" she cried, seized with a fit of fury. "No, it's not true. . . . This is all just a nightmare. . . . No! You are never going to arrest me? I in prison! Why, it's horrible! . . . What have I done? Oh, I swear that you are mistaken!——"

She took her head between her hands.

"Oh, my brain is throbbing as if it would burst! . . . What does all this mean? I have done no wrong. . . . I knew nothing. It was you who told me this morning. . . . Could I have suspected? My poor husband . . . And that dear Edmond who loved me . . . and whom I loved! . . . Why should I have killed them? Tell me that! Why don't you answer?" she demanded. "People don't commit murder without a motive. . . . Well? . . . Well? . . . Answer me, can't you?"

And once more convulsed with anger, standing in an aggressive attitude, with her clenched hands outstretched at the group of magistrates, she screamed:

"You're no better than butchers . . . you have no right to torture a woman like this. . . . Oh, how horrible! To accuse me . . . To arrest me . . . for nothing! . . . Oh, it's abominable! . . . What butchers you all are! . . . And it's you in particular," addressing Perenna, "it's you—yes, I know—it's you who are the enemy.

"Oh, I understand! You had your reasons; you were here last night. . . . Then why don't they arrest you? Why not you, as you were here and I was not and know nothing, absolutely nothing of what happened? . . . Why isn't it you?"

TO BE CONTINUED

# TURNING TIDES

## BY CHARLES CAMPBELL JONES

OLAF in a street-brawl
  Sheathed a Chino knife;
Manuel swilled a fever in
  That burned out his life;
What's become of English Dick?
  Where's the Dutchman been?
What's the word of all the tramps—
  Tramps that don't come in?

Beach, and bunk, and black blow,
  Seamen share, and pass—
Scud across a yellow moon,
  Shadows on a glass.
Frolic, fight, and fickle love—
  Ho! We're outward bound!
That's the way with lads and ships
  All the world around.

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# HOW IT ENDED

## A Miss Demonstrator Story

### by C. Hilton-Turvey

THE afternoon performance was over. The audience were departing, leaving the aisles and seats strewn with discarded programs in disorderly profusion. A smell of peanuts, perfume and peppermint hung in the air.

The last stragglers disappeared through the glass doorways. The orchestra gathered up their instruments and ducked under the low exits beneath the stage. Men appeared with brooms and began to clear up the débris in the aisles. Dust arose, pungent and stifling.

Miss Demonstrator sat in the star's room, her black bag on her lap, empty save for a few jars and bottles of the beauty preparations which she vended.

The star had plastered her face with cold cream to remove the make-up. As she worked, her eyes ran rapidly over a slip of paper scribbled over in lead-pencil. In every company some one keeps tab on the performance—generally the Musical Director. It is his duty to note the delinquencies of the company—their appearance, their behavior, their shortcomings, vocally and otherwise.

The star made a gesture of impatience.

"Rosalie again!"

She turned to "Miss Dem," her face glistening with cream under the towel tied about her forehead to keep the hair back. "Something went wrong with her second song. Did you notice it?"

"Not particularly," returned the little demonstrator, tactful as ever. Of course she had noticed it—every one had. Rosalie had begun on the wrong note and queered the orchestra no end. But as usual she had scowled on the Director and refused to budge; so he had switched around to another key and faked the accompaniment to the finish, though the other instruments had dropped out. Of course it had to go down on the slip. Rosalie was "in for it."

The star arose, and going to the door of her dressing-room, poked out her head.

Archie, the stage electrician, came along, struggling into his overcoat as he went to save time.

"Oh, Archie!" she called. "Send Rosalie to me, won't you?" He nodded and turned aside to the chorus girls' room.

In a moment a fair, plump, overblown girl came hurrying to the star's door,


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tapped, and without waiting for an answer walked in. She held her scarlet kimono together with one artificially whitened hand. "Want me?" she asked abruptly.

Miss Dem backed out and made herself scarce before the storm broke. But since she had not yet had her talk out with the star, she strolled toward the front of the stage to wait. She had hardly taken a dozen steps when the star's door opened and banged shut. Rosalie rushed out, her face red with anger.

"Just let me find the sneak!" she cried passionately.

"Now," murmured Miss Dem grimly, "there's goin' to be ructions!"

A second later the woman's voice rose in shrill protest.

"You skunk! Why didn't you come to me like a man, instead of goin' behind my back and snitchin' on me?"

"I'm not paid to report to you." The Director's voice was icy. It seemed to rouse the girl to new fury.

"You queered my act!" she screamed.

"You queered it yourself——"

"You lie!"

The voices penetrated to every part of the theater. Half-dressed men and girls came running from their dressing-rooms and crowded about the contestants. Miss Dem joined them. She was not averse to the excitement of a scrap.

Rosalie and the Musical Director stood facing each other, their heads craned forward like a couple of game bantams in the pit. He was tall, lean, nervous, dark and typically Italian. She was plump and fair—an opulent beauty.

"Let me pass!" he commanded.

She placed herself deliberately in his way, her arms akimbo. "You!" she sneered. "And who are you?"

"Who am I?" He bowed sarcastically. "I am the Musical Director of this company. Who are you?"

"Who am I?" she shrilled triumphantly. "I am Mrs. Elton B. Montgomery, the wife of the Stage Manager of this company—whom you may have met!" She spread out her kimono with the tips of her fingers, and swept him a disdainful courtesy.

The Director grew livid. His English began to desert him.

"I—I—ze star-r will——"

The Stage Manager came hurrying down the narrow stair. He pushed past the Italian and approached his wife.

"For Heaven's sake, Rosalie," he begged, "don't get me into this thing!"

Rosalie brushed him aside with one wave of her strong white arm, as if he were an intrusive fly. "Stay out, then!" she said sharply. "I can manage him by myself."

The husband, with a gesture of despair, flung himself out of the group, took the stairs at a bound, and disappeared.

Rosalie returned to the attack. She surveyed the Italian with contempt. "What do you know about music, anyway?" she demanded. "You flea-bitten Dago!"

Signor Arilla clutched his pompadour wildly, as if to hold on to the little English he possessed.

"Me? About music?" he sobbed, smiting his chest with his slim brown fingers. "You haf ze—ze—nerf—to ask me zat!"

She laughed at the top of her high voice, her hands on her hips, her head thrown back.

The Director sprang forward. He shook his lean fist at her. The tears poured down his face. "——! ——!" he howled. "Me, I weel keel you!"

After this threat the battle became unintelligible. They bent toward each other till their noses almost touched, and yelled in chorus like a couple of cats.

The comedian whacked his partner on the back and burst into laughter.

"Oh, this is a peach of a scrap!" Rosalie saw him and glared, speechless, a moment.

Miss Dem took advantage of the pause to whisper in the irate woman's ear: "Say, Rosalie, how about that facial massage? I'll give it to you now, half price, if you don't keep me waiting."

The shot struck home. Rosalie was close where her pocket was concerned. She blinked at Miss Dem a second in silence. Then with a superb gesture of her bare arms she waved the whole affair away from her, turned, and went back to the dressing-room with Miss Dem, leaving the Italian still raving and tearing his blue-black hair.

THAT was the beginning of the trouble. It grew and grew till it got on the nerve of the Folly Burlesque. Rosalie and the Musical Director spat at each other like a couple of tigers whenever they met. He sat and glowered at her with smoldering eyes, when

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he thought himself unobserved. She never missed an opportunity to be impudent to Arilla; and besides, she was on edge with everybody in the company.

The Manager, who probably "caught it" at home, was gloomy and abrupt—not like his usual cheerful, likable self. As for Arilla's little wife, Marta, she had a scared look, and her face grew pale and peaked. She kept out of Rosalie's way; but when they met the sparks flew. Marta, when cornered, had a spirit of her own; and she could make big Rosalie wince.

There were daily flare-ups in the erstwhile happy family of the Follies. All took sides—some for the Arillas, some for the Montgomerys; and the friction brought out the bad traits in every mother's son and daughter of them.

To this atmosphere, tingling with the heat of human passion, the little demonstrator came as a soothing breeze. She loved them all, and they felt it. In her presence they grew a shade less militant with each other—a degree more reasonable. Often she broke an ominous calm between two opposing factions by a timely joke or a bit of irresistible by-play. And since there is no more effectual way of keeping folks from fighting than by making them laugh, she increased the number of her visits to the theater, on the pretense that business was extraordinarily dull elsewhere. Like the rest of them, she sensed impending tragedy. There was murder in the air.

ONE day toward the end of the week, about an hour before the matinée, Miss Dem sauntered through the stage door, with a nod to the doorkeeper. She carried a jar of powder that had been 'phoned for in a hurry. There seemed to be no one about as she went up the corridor, dimly lighted by a modest equipment of electric bulbs. She chid herself for coming so early.

Suddenly, from somewhere ahead of her in the hall, came sounds of a scuffle—a smothered voice crying out in fear.

In a flash Miss Demonstrator was around the turn in the hall. There in the semi-darkness two figures struggled to and fro, thudding against the walls of the narrow corridor. A man and a woman—Arilla and Rosalie!

Rosalie, far from forcing the battle, was shrinking in fear, her hands before her face. The reason was plain. The Director held something that flickered in the uncertain light—a knife with a short, curved blade.

"You weel insult me!" he panted. "You weel! Take that!"

Miss Dem leaped from where she stood. Two arms closed about Arilla like the noose of a lariat.

The infuriated man tried to loosen her grasp; he flung himself from side to side. But the little demonstrator hung on like a bull pup. Not for nothing had massaging made her muscles like iron. Dragged from her feet—swung against the wall—she set her teeth and locked her hands the tighter.

She wondered vaguely, dizzy with the effort, why Rosalie did not come to her aid. Her hat drooped drunkenly over her eyes, escaping its pins, but presently she got a glimpse of the hall over Arilla's shoulder. It was empty.

Meanwhile Rosalie fled down the corridor to Billy the doorkeeper, gasped out, "Murder!" and sank to the floor in a dead faint. Billy sprang to his feet and darted up the hall, calling out as he went to the comedian and his partner, who were just coming in at the door.

The three men arrived almost together on the scene. Quickly they overpowered the Italian. The comedian sent the dagger flying with a sudden twist of Arilla's wrist. The other two held the glaring madman and tried to soothe him.

The little vendor of massage and creams sat on the floor, her back to the wall, Her hat was off, her hair streaming down her back; and she nursed a strained wrist with an air of solicitude. The comedian bent over her.

"Are you hurt, Miss Dem?" he asked anxiously. Miss Dem tried to laugh, but it sounded rather shaky.

"Me hurt?" she repeated with an attempt at her usual impudence. "I'm too tough to get hurt—I'm made of Goodyear's best." She stretched out her hand. "Help me up—there's a nice boy."

Voices approached. The company had begun to arrive.

Rosalie came slowly along the corridor, leaning on some one's arm, pale and trembling. The two men who held Arilla hustled him away on her approach. She threw her arms around the Demonstrator and burst into tears. The company crowded around them, demanding an explanation.

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"It was this way," Rosalie began, raising her head from Miss Dem's shoulder and wiping her reddened eyes. "I just happened to meet that Eytalian devil in the hall. I didn't say a word to him—not a word!" she repeated vehemently. "And he whipped out a knife and went for me! He'd have slit my throat," she continued, shuddering, "if Miss Dem hadn't grabbed him. I seen I was goin' to faint, so I flew down to Billy and put him wise before I fell over. O-o-oh!" She put her hands over her face and began to cry again. "I didn't—say—a word—to him!" she sobbed.

The comedian's lip curled.

"Oh, no!" he mimicked. "You didn't—say—a word. But I'll bet you looked a few, you jungle-cat!"

Rosalie's mood changed in a twinkling. She stamped her foot at him. "Don't you dare to speak to me!" she yelled.

The comedian spat contemptuously on the floor and turned away.

The fight was on again. Every one in the group started to talk at once. They faced each other in a wordy war. More of the company came, till the corridor was crowded.

Miss Dem leaned dizzily against the wall, getting her disheveled hair into order.

The Manager strode into the center of the crowd. His high silk hat was pushed back on his head. He held a light cane under one arm.

"What's this?" he demanded. "Another scrap?"

The soubrette answered him.

"It's that Dago again!" she snapped. "He near killed Rosalie!"

"Yes!" the comedian bawled angrily, coming back into the group. "And serve her right if he had, too!"

"Say that again!" The Manager stood over the speaker with uplifted cane.

Miss Dem slid between them and grabbed the end of the cane. She looked up with smiling impudence into his angry face.

"Say!" she drawled plaintively. "Before you lick the excelsior out of a perfectly good funny man, would you mind takin' your hind hoof off of my best hat?"

She pointed to the floor. There lay her hat, torn off in the scuffle, and the heel of the Manager's patent leather was planted in the middle of the crown.

He stepped off, abashed, picked it up and handed it to her with a rueful smile.

"Awfully sorry," he said; "but if you *will* hang your millinery up on the floor——"

Miss Dem twirled the hat around on her finger, surveying it from all sides. It looked like a comedy hat—the feather broken and hanging drunkenly, the brim dented. A twinkle of fun came into her eyes. Quick as a flash she snatched the Manager's silk hat from his head and substituted her own.

"You owe me a new one!" she cried, putting his on her head and pulling it down.

Now Miss Dem had a small head, and the Manager's dignified millinery came down till the rim rested on her shoulders, entirely eclipsing her face.

"Good-by!" she said in a muffled voice, and turning away began to grope her way along the hall. She looked like a kitten with a paper bag on its head. But hardly any funnier than the Manager looked in her hat. Every one laughed. The Manager ran after her and captured his tile.

Miss Dem smiled up mischievously at him. For once more the little Dem had averted a scrap—this time by her inimitable gift of fun. She steered him straight to his office and engaged him in conversation till he looked at his watch, exclaimed "Time for the overture!" and skipped out to the dressing-rooms. Nor did he remember till late in the afternoon that he had been on the verge of a quarrel.

"I'M WORRIED sick!" the star exclaimed that evening before the performance, as she gave herself over to the demonstrator's skilful fingers. "Marta came in after it was all over, as white as a sheet. She told me she was scared to death for fear something would happen. Luigi—that's Arilla—has such a terrible temper, she says. And if any one opposes him, he flares up and doesn't know what he's doing. On my word, Demmy, I'm sorry for that kid—she's only eighteen, and she's been married to Arilla a year. I bet she's had to stand his temper. But she loves him," she finished with a sigh.

"Turn 'round a mite more," said Miss Dem. "There! That's right. I can't use my wrist very good tonight. I give it a bad wrench today, playin' barnacles with Luigi."

"You're a plucky proposition!" the star commended warmly. Miss Dem laughed.

"Who? Me?" she said, quickly changing

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the subject. "This scrap, now—it's a foursome, ain't it?"

The star threw out her hands in a gesture of despair.

"That's the worst of engaging married people," she declared. "If there's any unpleasantness, it's——"

"He and she—against him an' her," Miss Dem finished quaintly.

"That's just it." The star was silent a moment. "If I could bounce one or two of them—but I can't. Both Montgo ery and Arilla are extremely valuable men. I couldn't replace them anyway, now, in the swing of the season. As for the two girls—if I got rid of Rosalie, she'd make Montgomery quit in a jiffy and leave me high and dry. Little Marta is a nice child, and if I bounced her Arilla would get back at me in some way. He's a gasoline torch of a man; you know those Italians!"

"Well," Miss Dem observed, her deft fingers kneading and patting as she talked, "I won't say I haven't troubles of my own. But, thank the particular cherub that has me in tow, I ain't called like you are to set on a keg of dynamite to keep the lid on, nor to swing my heels on the side of a volcano till the blame thing busts up. Me for the tranquil job every time!"

She unpinned the towel from the star's head.

"There!" she said, stepping back to survey her work. "I've took ten years off of you at one whack!"

The star glanced into the mirror.

"Dear knows I need it," she returned. "This everlasting scrapping is aging me. It's on my nerve for good."

Miss Dem gathered up her possessions—her tiny alcohol stove, her box of matches, and her creams—and tucked them away in her bag. Then she stood chatting with the harassed actress, gradually leading the conversation away from the troubles of the Folly Burlesque to brighter things, till the anxious look gave way to a smile. Then with a parting jest the little vendor was gone, leaving Miss Velmar chuckling.

As for Miss Dem, she lounged about behind the scenes and joked with Archie till the evening show began. Then she took a seat "out front" and saw the performance. But her head still buzzed from the battle of the afternoon, and she felt sad and apprehensive.

When it was over she chatted a while with Billy at the door, sitting on one end of his bench.

Rosalie came down the hall and sat beside her. "Montgomery had to skip out at the end of the last bit," she said, "to see one of the circuit people; and after today, I'm scary about——"

"Come along with me," Miss Dem responded. "I go past your place, and I don't charge nothin' extry to understudy Fido the Watchdog to a lone lady."

They sat talking longer than they realized, while the show people passed out for the night.

Presently Billy arose with a yawn.

"Sorry, but here's where——"

Miss Dem jumped up before he could finish.

"Hark at the cuckoo clock warblin' half past bedtime! Come on, Rosalie!"

They bade Billy good night and hurried out into the dark side-street.

About a block below the theater, just where a telegraph pole cast its black shadow across the mouth of an alleyway, Miss Dem stumbled over a man's feet projecting therefrom. His prostrate body lay in the alley.

"Some drunken bum!" Rosalie commented, with a shrug of her shoulders.

But Miss Dem turned back, looked keenly at the slim, well shod feet, then stooped over the man and peered into his face.

"Don't be too sure," she cautioned her.

At the sound of her voice, he groaned; then muttered faintly, "Help me."

"You bet I will!" announced Miss Dem with emphasis. "Come, Rosalie," she commanded. "You take his head; I'll take his feet. We'll get him out into the light."

"Not if I know it!" Rosalie tossed her head and walked on a few steps. "If you want to get mixed up with drunks——"

"Shut up!" said Miss Dem sharply. "Come here and look!" She groped in her bag for a match.

Rosalie came back unwillingly and stood beside her.

The match flared up.

"My Heaven!" the girl cried out, and shuddered away from the sight.

There before them, disheveled and bloody, lay Signor Arilla.

ROSALIE clutched at Miss Dem with trembling hands.

"Oh," she moaned, "if it—it it was—was—Montgomery that did it——"

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Miss Dem threw off the clinging fingers. "It's no time to think thinks," she said curtly. "Get to work!"

Stooping, she lifted the head of the unconscious man. Rosalie, beside herself with terror, took his feet. Together they carried him to the curb and laid him down in the lightest place they could find. He had a wound on the back of the head, and he seemed unconscious of their presence. From time to time he moaned faintly.

"Run back and get Billy!" Miss Dem commanded the girl. But Rosalie stood stock still, wringing her hands and muttering: "Oh, I hope it wasn't Montgomery! I hope it wasn't him!" Then suddenly she began to laugh hysterically.

Miss Dem looked about her helplessly a moment. An unfrequented side-street at one in the morning, with an unconscious man and a hysterical girl, was not a combination she would have chosen. Then in a second her mind was made up. She reached out and dealt Rosalie a stinging blow full in the face.

"Now will you do as I tell you?" she said between her teeth.

The girl drew her hand across her eyes as if waking from sleep.

"Oh, Miss Dem!" she whimpered.

"Get Billy!" the demonstrator repeated sternly.

Rosalie started up the street on a run. In the stillness Miss Dem heard her a block off, pounding on the stage door and calling wildly on Billy.

In a few moments she came running back.

"Billy isn't there!" she panted. "He must have gone out the front way."

Miss Dem's face set itself grimly.

"What shall I do?" the girl asked.

"Keep on runnin' till you find a policeman. Get him to send in an ambulance call. I'll stay here till it comes, unless you'd rather——"

She made as if to rise from the curb.

Rosalie threw out her hands in a gesture of repugnance.

"Don't ask me!" she shuddered. "I'd rather run all night."

She was off again, leaving Miss Dem alone with the wounded man. It seemed an eternity she sat there, wiping the blood off his forehead, and trying to stanch the deeper wound on the back of his head. He roused a little once as she moved him.

"Who did it?" she asked, bending close to his face. But Arilla only muttered unintelligibly and lapsed into silence again.

Miss Dem's heart was heavy. She was loath to believe that the genial Manager could have attacked the Italian. Still, she remembered his rage of the afternoon, when he would have beaten the comedian—and for less provocation than Arilla had given him. Rosalie's ill tempered pride had stirred up a fine mess in the Follies!

Miss Dem liked the Manager. He had always been kind and friendly to her, and he was good nature itself under ordinary circumstances. But even a better natured man than Montgomery might have been tempted to take the punishment of Arilla into his own hands, after the murderous attack of the afternoon.

She sighed and lifted Arilla's head to a more comfortable position on her knees. Around her was the furtive stillness of the great city. Only an occasional footfall sounded at the end of the street; an occasional passer-by cast an attenuated shadow up the by-street, nearly to her feet, and was gone. A wandering cat, as gray as the night, glided past her and disappeared down a cellarway. It seemed an eternity before she heard the sound of wheels in the distance.

THE red lights of a patrol-wagon appeared around the corner. As it stopped abreast of her an officer swung himself off and stooped over the injured man. He made a hasty examination of the wound on Arilla's head, felt his pulse, and turned down his eyelids.

"Hospital case," he announced briefly, turning to the driver. "Give us a hand, Jim!"

The two picked up the Italian and laid him on a blanket on the floor of the patrol-wagon.

"Want to come?" he asked Miss Dem, evidently supposing her to be some relative of Arilla.

"Yes," she answered. "Where's the lady who called you?"

"Here I am," Rosalie replied from the depths of the wagon.

Miss Dem hopped in. The driver whipped up. They careered madly around corners, swinging off and on the car tracks, till it was all the two women could do to hang on to their seats. Presently they

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stopped at the emergency door of a hospital, clanging the gong deafeningly.

Two white-coated attendants ran out with a stretcher and carried Arilla in.

Miss Dem and Rosalie started to follow.

"Hold on!" bade the patrolman. "I want your names and addresses." He whipped out his notebook and stepped forward to the light.

Miss Dem bent toward Rosalie, fearful of what she might say.

"Let me answer," she whispered.

This formality dispatched, they passed into the hospital by another door and were directed to the visitors' parlor. Here Miss Dem looked up Arilla's address in the 'phone book and broke the news as gently as possible to Marta.

Her answering voice came back piteously.

"Oh, I was afraid it would end this way," she sobbed. "Why didn't I wait for him tonight!" She hung up and started on her way to the hospital.

Miss Dem turned away with a sigh. "You'd better go home," she advised Rosalie. "Marta mustn't see you when she comes."

Rosalie shook her head.

"I won't go till I know what the doctors say," she announced. "Oh, if it was Montgomery that did it——" She stopped and looked at the little vendor with miserable eyes. "Honest to goodness," she added, "I'm afraid to go home and find out the truth!"

Miss Dem patted her shoulder and gave what comfort she could, which was little.

Suddenly Marta's voice sounded in the corridor, pleading to be taken to her husband.

A man's tones answered her.

"Just wait in here a moment; he is still in the operating-room. You shall see him in a little while."

They heard her coming nearer, begging for news of him.

Rosalie looked about for a hiding-place. The room was small, and brightly lighted in every corner. She could not leave the room without running into Marta.

"What shall I do?" she whispered nervously.

Miss Dem stepped quickly to the door. It was wide open and lay flat against the wall. She swung it forward, placed a chair in front of it, and beckoned to the excited girl. "Stand behind there!" she commanded softly, hustling Rosalie into the spa between the door and the wall, "and be quiet as you possibly can."

Hardly had Rosalie slipped into the pla of concealment when Marta came in, h eyes red with weeping. She had evident run all the way.

"Oh, dear Miss Dem!" she gasped, throw ing her arms around her. "Isn't it drea ful!"

"There, there!" Miss Dem said soothin ly, leading her to a seat as far from the do as possible. "He'll be all right in a litt while—a few weeks at most."

Marta burst into fresh sobs.

"A few weeks!" she echoed. "The sho moves on the day after tomorrow. I can leave him this way. Think what even th money side of it means to us. Of cours I can take a position here in town, but can't keep it long." She looked about h to make sure they were alone, then spok very fast and in a low tone, blushing furiou ly, with downcast eyes.

"You poor little devil!" Miss Dem ejacu lated.

"I didn't know till after we had signe the forty-weeks' contract. But Luigi an I thought I could keep on for a while, an then get another girl to take my plac But now——"

She looked at Miss Dem, trying hard no to cry, but with quivering lips that b trayed her feelings.

"We were so happy!" she went on aft a moment. "It was our first engagemen together since we were married, and w determined not to get mixed up with th cliques that always divide these show Luigi said that if we both did exactly righ nothing could happen; but when he di what Miss Velmar told him to do—to her what went wrong in front—Rosal hadn't the sense to see that she was t blame, not Luigi. If she had taken h medicine, the way all the rest do, it wou have stopped right there; but no! She w the wife of the Manager and couldn't l called down——"

A hospital orderly stood in the doorwa white linen from head to foot.

"Now you can come," he said to Mart "But he won't know you."

The young wife sprang up and crosse the room. At the door she turned an came swiftly back to the demonstrator.

"I'm so glad you were here," sh

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murmured, and kissed her fervently. "It's done me good to talk to you."

When the sound of her footsteps had died away down the corridor, Rosalie emerged from behind the door. Her rather heavy face was absolutely expressionless. Miss Dem, surveying her curiously, could not determine whether she had heard the low-toned conversation or not.

"Let's go home," she said listlessly. Together they passed into the street.

The orderly stood at the emergency entrance talking to a friend. Miss Dem touched him on the shoulder.

"Will he pull through?" she asked. "The man you just brought in?"

"Who? Oh, the Italian. Can't tell yet; come in the morning," he bade them, and turned away.

They hurried down the street. Rosalie was silent. She seemed to have fallen into a fateful mood, prepared for the worst that could happen—passive and sullen.

The streets were deserted save for an occasional passer-by. It was now half past two. As they turned into the avenue Miss Dem caught sight of a familiar figure, long-coated, silk-hatted, nervously swinging a light cane—Montgomery himself. She stopped short and pointed, unable to speak in the rush of feeling that came over her. For there flashed before her mind a picture of the Manager wearing the stripes, his face drawn and gray with the prison pallor; the death watch; the terrible "chair."

Rosalie saw him at the same moment. She stood stock still, clutching Miss Dem's arm.

He came hurrying up to them.

"Good Heaven, Rosalie!" he called out. "Where have you been? I've been clear to the Troc., hunting you!"

The girl made no answer. She went white under the electric light.

Montgomery came close. He was puzzled by her silence.

"Are you hurt?" he asked excitedly. "Has that —— Dago——"

There was that in his manner which made Miss Dem let out her breath in a long sigh, as a deep-water diver who rises to the air again.

"No," she answered with her usual joyous impudence, "that —— Dago hasn't!"

But Rosalie still stared at him.

"Where have you been?" she asked in a dull, heavy voice.

"Why, Rosalie," he returned impatiently, "I told you I was going to see Cohen, the circuit man, about the transportation of that extra scenery. By great good luck I met him at the stage door as I went out. We went down to Jensen's to talk it over. I just got home about twenty minutes ago, and I've been worried to death about you!"

He stood frowning perplexedly upon her. Much to his surprise, his wife burst into tears.

"Oh, Montgomery! Montgomery!" she cried, and threw her arms around his neck.

"Now what the deuce——" he began, turning to Miss Dem for an explanation and patting Rosalie's shoulder soothingly meanwhile.

"We've been up to the hospital with Arilla," Miss Dem explained. "We found him in the street all beat up, poor lamb!"

The Manager stood silent while she told him the story. An expression of sympathy came into his face. The antagonism of a moment before died down in him, as fire out of a coal.

"I'm sorry," he said simply, when she had finished. "Come, let us get home."

They walked on briskly, the Montgomerys passing their own corner to see the little demonstrator safely at her door. She kept up a stream of conversation all the way, postponing the inevitable moment when it should dawn on the Manager what his wife's suspicions had been. That was a scene at which she emphatically did not wish to be present.

She breathed freely when they left her at last, latch key in hand, at the foot of her steps.

The next morning was a busy one, but Miss Dem found time to call at the hospital. Arilla still lived, and the doctors believed he would pull through. As she ran down the steps Rosalie came hurrying toward her, an unspoken question in her pale face.

Miss Dem nodded cheerily.

"All right!" she sang out. "He'll be all well in a month or so."

Rosalie took both Miss Dem's hands and shook them heartily.

"Oh!" she cried. "I'm so glad!"

The little demonstrator smiled up at her whimsically. Only the day before Rosalie had laughed when the Musical Director had stumbled over a violin case—had laughed and openly wished that he "had broken his fool neck!" And now——



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"Oh, Miss Dem!" she exclaimed breathlessly, the color flushing her face. "I never was so happy in my life as last night, when I found out Montgomery didn't do it. I tell you, it takes a big thing like that to make you see things as they are."

"As how?" Miss Dem asked innocently, winking to herself with the eye farthest from Rosalie. She felt the moral value of a direct statement in Rosalie's case.

"Oh!" the girl burst out. "I knew all along I was in the wrong about that fight with Arilla. I knew it as soon as I cooled down. But it's awful hard for me to give in, so I bluffed it out all the week. Montgomery and me, we had lots of scraps about it!

"But last night when I thought my husband had done for Arilla on my account, it come over me what it meant. Just because I'd been stubborn and wanted my own way, all our lives would be spoiled. Oh, yes; I thought it all out, you can bet! Montgomery hung for murder, and me a widow—Arilla dead, and Marta all alone too—and—and—a kid on the way!"

"Hm-hm," murmured Miss Dem sympathetically.

"I thought I'd been willing to say anything—that I was in wrong, or anything else—if I could only make all that not happen——" Rosalie paused.

"Well?" Miss Dem said gently.

The girl hung her head shamefacedly.

"But this morning," she went on, "I just hate to have them know I even feel sorry—I hate to give in."

"It's a bum old feelin', all right!" agreed the little vendor thoughtfully.

They walked along in silence a few moments.

"There's a way of doin' such things, though," Miss Dem said after a while, "that makes you feel like you had a new hat on, an' had lapped up a quart of champagne."

Rosalie smiled indulgently.

"Me from Missouri," she commented.

"Well," Miss Dem went on, "as a rule, I'm for holdin' the fort till yer back teeth drop out. But if I had to mosey out, I'd a heap rather come out in the sunrise with the flags flyin' an' the village band playin' till they like to bust, than to sneak by when the evenin' shades was fallin' fast, hopin' no one would lamp what I was doin'. There ain't no shame in havin' another guess, an' sayin' so, if you do it the right way."

"Well," asked Rosalie reluctantly, "what *is* that right way?"

THAT afternoon Miss Dem came early to the theater to give the star a special treatment with a new cream. Presently, however, a 'phone call came from Miss Velmar that she was interviewing a new musical director to take Arilla's place for the time being, and she would have her massage after the show.

So the genial little vendor waited about, got a few extra orders, and was here, there, and everywhere during the afternoon performance, with a lighter heart than she had known for days. The tragedy of the previous evening was on every tongue, and in sympathy for the Arillas the past feud was forgotten. All the company were relieved to know that the Manager had been able to prove an alibi, for in spite of occasional friction Montgomery was well liked. And though the hospital was far removed from the theater, they unconsciously spoke softly, and were very subdued for the jolly, boisterous company Miss Dem knew so well.

When Miss Velmar came off after the first part Miss Dem went to her room with a request that surprised that lady greatly.

"Why, yes," she said. "Of course I will." So when the curtain descended on the last bit and number, shutting off the stage from the blazing footlights and the vanishing audience, she clapped her hands and bade the company remain a few minutes.

The comedian in his loud plaid suit and red wig chucked his partner under the chin.

"Some one for a call-down," he remarked.

The partner assented gloomily, and searched his histrionic conscience for a flaw in his conduct.

"You bet it's a call-down."

But it wasn't. To their surprise Rosalie came and stood beside the star, her hands behind her back. She seemed embarrassed.

"Rosalie wants to say something to you all," the star announced.

Now it's one thing to appear before the curtain, and another thing to harangue one's fellow actors behind it. Rosalie stood on one slippered foot and looked helplessly about her.

The irrepressible comedian sneaked up

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behind her, and grabbing her by the neck bobbed her head up and down in a comic bow.

"The pride of the school will now speak her little piece," he said, "after which we will conclude by singing that touching little ditty entitled, 'Nothin' Doin'!'"

Archie hauled him off by main force.

"Oh, get out!" he said disgustedly. "Do you want to keep us here all night?"

The Manager stood twirling his cane. He looked nervous. He always felt uncomfortable when his headstrong wife took things into her own hands. This she was only too evidently about to do. He leaned against a bit of scenery and tried to look indifferent.

Rosalie hummed and hawed on the brink for a few moments. Then her wandering eye met Miss Dem's gaze fixed upon her with a certain steely command. The girl drew a deep breath, threw up her head like a mettlesome mustang, and plunged.

"You all know about Mr. Arilla," she began, "how he's goin' to be laid up for weeks and weeks, and how Marta will have to hustle for the two of 'em. You're all sorry—but not one of you is as sorry as I am! I feel as if I'd wished it on them. And I want to say right here, that I was in wrong on that scrap—and I don't care who knows it!"

She paused and glanced defiantly about her. She looked superb as she stood there facing them, her splendid figure poised like a statue of Victory, her eyes shining like jewels through the mask of her make-up. And Miss Dem, gazing upon her, felt the faint thrill that comes with the sound of distant trumpets, the flutter of scarlet banners, the pulse of gallantly marching feet.

The star nodded approval. Some one called out, "Good for you, Rosalie!"

Rosalie's hands came from behind her back. In one she held a pencil, in the other a piece of paper.

"Say," she finished, "can't we get together and give something to help them out?"

There was a chorus of hearty assent.

"Why, sure!"

The comedian burst into loud satiric laughter, but he was the first to come forward. He took the paper and, holding it up against a painted tree, wrote his name down for a sum that he most certainly could not afford without cutting out everything that made life worth the living.

Even in the face of this wanton extravagance, he whistled when he noticed the amount Rosalie had written in her sprawling hand at the top of the paper. He turned and smote her genially on the back.

"That's some wad you're blowin' in, kiddo!" he remarked.

She snatched the paper out of his hand.

"Mind your business!" she said rudely.

The show-people crowded around her and gave as only "the profession" can give when its warm sympathies are touched. And even those who had sided virulently against Arilla came up and contributed to the limit of their means.

The Manager strolled up to where Rosalie stood and laid his arm lightly across her bare shoulder. His face was flushed with pride in her. For days he had tasted the bitterness of conflict—of the knowledge that his wife was in the wrong. And even with that knowledge he was forced to hold with her because of the tie between them. Now Rosalie had done what he had never known her to do—had openly admitted herself to be in the wrong.

Miss Dem saw from afar and was glad. She walked around the edge of the group and stood beside them.

"This here's some girl!" she said, indicating Rosalie with a nod and smile.

The Manager's eyes grew warm and friendly.

"Yes," he returned significantly, "and it's some Demonstrator, too!"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"You smell mice when there ain't none around," she declared. "I didn't have anything to do with it!"

The star came over and drew Miss Dem's arm through her own. Together they entered her dressing-room. Presently the little vendor was patting and smoothing and dabbing. The odor of cold cream scented the room. The star smiled contentedly into the mirror.

"I can sleep happy tonight," she remarked, "now that things are settled. I've breathed blood for days! How generously they all gave!"

Miss Dem smiled whimsically.

"No half-way measures for the 'profesh'," she mused aloud. "They'll either do anything *to* you, or anything *for* you—just as they happen to feel in the mood."

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# The RETURN of the SIX HUNDRED

## by George Albert Schreiner

THE extraordinary and memorable exit of the soldiers of fortune of the Veld was preceded by one of the nastiest little tricks diplomatic wire-pullers could well be guilty of. But more of that will be said at the proper time.

Things had gone from bad to worse. Generals Buller, Hamilton and French had driven the Boer commandos through the gorges in the Eastern Transvaal. Helvetia, Waterfall Boven and Waterfall Onder, Barberton and several other points of the greatest strategic importance had been taken. Now the column commanded by General Louis Botha found itself in the Laageveld—a fever-ridden district against the Portuguese border.

The British having advanced along the Swaziland border, a détour to the south had become impossible. In the west, toward the Hoogeveld, the passes were in the possession of Tommy Atkins. The east was the long line of border of Portuguese Southeast Africa. There was nothing else to do but trek through the Laageveld toward the north. But that would cut off completely all communication of the Boers with the outside world! For a few days General Botha was in doubt what to do. The outlook, as may readily be inferred, was gloomy in the extreme.

But the thing that made matters worse was the presence in his camps of the soldiers of fortune and the Cape rebels. Botha feared that they would come to grief in case hostilities were brought to an end. Down in Cape Colony several rebels, among them Commandant Schepers, had been tried by drumhead courtmartial and had been promptly despatched by means of the firing-squad and the gallows.

Moreover, General Roberts had promised interviews with the hangman to all foreigners in the service of the Boers who would not be able to establish *bona-fide* belligerency by means of a naturalization certificate antedating the outbreak of the war by a month or so.

But a solution came, just as the cavalry screens of the British forces invaded the Laageveld.

A few words concerning the military terrain involved will be of interest.

Generally the Laageveld, or Low Veld, is a sandy plain of undulating topography. It is traversed in its southern extent by the Komati and Crocodile Rivers, joining at Komatipoort, frontier station of the Transvaal. The rainfall is rather heavy here, with the result that the rivers rise beyond their banks. The two streams carry virtually all the precipitation of the eastern watershed of the Hoogeveld, and while placid enough ordinarily, become raging torrents during the rainy season. Swamps and morasses form everywhere and breed the many varieties of deadly fevers for which the Laageveld has become notorious throughout South Africa.

Mention of these climatic foibles may seem superfluous. However, they have their value here. They caused Lisbon one of the worst headaches it had ever had. Even the genial King Carlos went up in the air about it.



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THE *KOP* THAT COULDN'T BE TAKEN

ONE fine day, then, Louis Botha instructed all commandants and veldcornets to inform such soldiers of fortune and Cape rebels as were under their command to prepare for their departure to Komatipoort. At first the order was not greatly relished. To most of the men affected, the decision of the General smacked of abandonment. No doubt at Komatipoort they would be left to their own devices.

But General Botha explained conditions in a neat little speech at Hectorspruit. That night the soldiers of fortune, numbering about three hundred; the Cape rebels, equally strong; and some thirty artillerymen boarded the last train that ran over the rails under the Republic and an hour later were dumped off at Komatipoort.

I was among those who wondered at the unusually large artillery detail that was to be taken to Komatipoort. Two days before we had destroyed with dynamite sixteen pieces for which we had no ammunition. The artillery-material taken to the border left the column of the General with only a few machine-guns. Even the last of the Long Toms was dragged along.

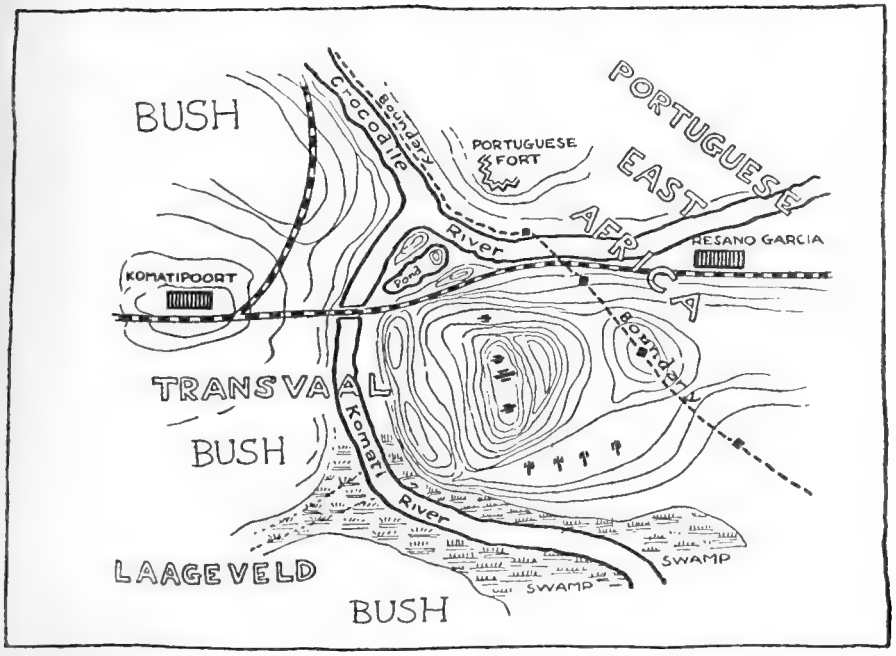
But next morning much was made clear.

The Komati and Crocodile Rivers join a little to the east of Komatipoort. Before the Komati reaches the other river it describes a sharp crescent toward the west. In the semicircle thus formed lies a hill, about four hundred feet high, and connected in the east with a low mountain-chain by a neck. Along the crest of the chain itself runs the frontier-line which separates the Transvaal from the Portuguese colony.

Here is another topographical detail that can not be slighted. The *kop* was well suited for the defense of a century—of all time, if possible; a defense that was to leave Thermopylæ and Salamis, not to mention the Alamo, absolutely at the post, as we thought.

And how easily this could have been done! Every man in the new commando felt that at last the British arms were up against it.

First there were the two rivers at the base of the hill. The Komati here has swampy banks and approaches, and the Crocodile races through banks that make those of the Tugela a mere make-believe. To the northwest of the *kop*—I don't think it ever had a name—the two rivers join and then squeeze their waters through a gorge so narrow that even the single-track railroad




THE *KOP* THAT COULDN'T BE TAKEN

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line from Lourenço Marques had to cut its way through the very walls of the *kop* on which this heroic stand was to be made. On the south the hill is nothing more than a series of precipices and narrow terraces which simply invited the slaughter of those who should attempt to scale the height.

In the back was the Portuguese border and a mile from there the border-town Resano Garcia.

With six hundred resolute men on that *kop*, and with the liberal number of guns at our disposal, the position was impregnable —nothing less. In addition, General Botha had caused all of his spare subsistence to be sent to the point. There was food enough for two months, and with the friendly Swazi but a few miles away, it would have been impossible to starve us out.

The fact that we needed no animals and had been sent there with none caused many of us anxious moments afterward.

Like beavers those men worked at the few trenches that were needed to make the preparation for the welcome of the enemy as complete and interesting as possible. By noon of the first day the guns were in position, with Long Tom crowning the crest of the *kop*. Meanwhile the men had been reorganized, and everybody was literally aching for action. You get that feeling when you know that everything is in your favor.

On the second day in the morning two English parliamentaries put in appearance. They argued with Commandant Pienaar, and a General whose name does not deserve mention here, that it would not be well to make a defense on that *kop*.

Pienaar, if I remember right, laughed at them. The parliamentaries went back and reported to General Buller.

### ENTER *EL COMMANDANTE*

FOUR days passed. From the west came the railroad trains. On them was the army that was to take the *kop* at Komatipoort at all cost. That chance to make ourselves immortal seemed to be close at hand. But the British War Office thought of the fevers of the Laageveld and acted accordingly.

Down the railroad right of way walked the Commandant of Resano Garcia, accompanied by two aides and a secretary. The man walked because the gorge did not offer foothold for a horse, and the railroad track proper was filled with freight cars and engines.

The man in the resplendent uniform wanted to see the commander-in-chief of the Boer forces. He soon did.

Awkwardly the Portuguese officer explained what his sad mission was. He had been informed by his Government that there must be no fighting on the border, and that the position taken by the Boers on their own territory would have to be evacuated. He regretted that Lisbon had reached that conclusion. He admitted that he had admired the splendid stand of the burghers. But, he explained in poor English, what was he to do? The Boer General knit his eyebrows and looked disgusted. Commandant Pienaar did likewise. The other Boer officers had lumps in their throats.

But *el Commandante* meant every word he said, and added something anent the three-mile limit. I had the pleasure of informing him that this, so far as I knew, applied only to coastlines and not to borders.

With a sickly smile the Commandant admitted that this was right.

"But," he asked again, "what can I do? These are my orders." So he left with the reminder that he would expect an answer in two hours.

That answer was that the ground occupied by the Boer commando was part of the South African Republic and that it would be held against all comers. Assurance was given that the border would not be violated, and that the first man who crossed it would be shot or otherwise severely dealt with. If the Portuguese authorities wanted to go that far, they could establish a cordon on the other side of the boundary beacons. Further than that the Boers could not meet his demands.

Next morning *el Commandante* was back bright and early. This time the instructions he had received per cable, with a relay at Mozambique for the benefit of the Governor of the Province, were rather more definite.

The Boers were to evacuate the position by eight o'clock next morning. None of the material of war, etc., was to be destroyed. If the burghers found it impossible to escape through the Laageveld and join the column of General Louis Botha, they would have the privilege of going into cantonment at Lourenço Marques, pending whatever further decision the Government at Lisbon

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might reach. Arms were to be stacked on the border.

The Boer General remonstrated mildly. The other officers present eased their mind with language not generally part of diplomatic communications.

But the Portuguese Commandant had an alternative. A fine one! In case the Boers did not comply with the wishes of his Government, he would be obliged to open fire on their position from yonder fort.

The Commandant pointed at some glacis across the gorge. They were located on that part of the *kop* which had been severed when the rivers broke through, and absolutely commanded the position of the Boers.

What an artillery enfilade from that position, and at that range, meant did not require much explanation. Shrapnel set at zero would have swept the Boer position like a scythe. Nothing would have lived on the *kop* after a few minutes.

"In addition," explained the Commandant sorrowfully, "I have been informed that the department at Lourenço Marques will send four regiments of infantry to aid in the execution of the orders from Lisbon——"

"And London," suggested some wag.

So the dream of that wonderful defense at Komatipoort fell to pieces. The dejection which followed was general and heartbreaking.

Between sundown and daybreak some of the men managed to get away. But few of them ever reached the Boer lines. Most of them perished from lack of water and food, and not a few were taken prisoners by the British.

### FIREWORKS

SO, AT eight or thereabouts, on September 27, if I am not mistaken, the Six Hundred massed on the Portuguese border. But there was no stacking of rifles. As the men walked along the railroad track, they smashed their Mausers and Martini-Henrys on the rail.

On the other side of the beacons the Portuguese infantry had formed a hollow square. Into this the men marched.

During the night the artillerymen had smashed and buried in the river the breechblocks. Now the guns stood in their *épaulements* with barrels packed with dynamite and nitrogelatine. One after another they went off, sending a hail of steel fragments and earth as far as Resano Garcia. That town was not a very safe place that morning.

But for it all a fitting finale had been arranged. On top of the *kop* there was one lone artilleryman, who had volunteered for a sad duty. For the last time he patted the long, brown muzzle of his Long Tom, made sure that the wet sand in the breech and muzzle was holding, and then he lit four fuses.

A stream of rolling pebbles and earth followed in his wake as he sped down the mountainside.

The mournful procession of Portuguese infantry, soldiers of fortune and Boers from the Cape had come to a halt at the railroad station of Resano Garcia.

Dapper young subalterns in gorgeous uniforms were doing their best to get a real taste of war. The cattle cars that were to take the Six Hundred to Lourenço Marques were waiting. The Commandant, riding a regulation charger, was prancing back and forth, irritated by the exploding guns.

He nearly fell off his horse the next moment. On top of the *kop* appeared a round cloud of purple hue, and then came a detonation that caused the Portuguese infantry to drop their rifles. The rain of bits of steel and rocks that followed was nothing to be sneered at. A large chunk of Long Tom went through the roof of the station house and nearly caused the operator's heart to stop for good and always.

### WHAT XENOPHON MISSED

OF THAT weary ride in the cattle cars—open ones at that—little need be said. Xenophon's Ten Thousand never suffered as did the Six Hundred under that blazing African sun, not mentioning the small matter of dust. It seemed that the puffy little engine would never pull that heavy load to the coast.

It was late in the afternoon when Lourenço Marques was reached. Again the defenders of the South African Republic were lined up. Then came the march to the barracks.

That sleepy East African port had never seen such a spectacle. The streets were lined, and every window filled. Here was a chance to see patriots—a sight which will fill any Latin, European or American—with emotions.

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And such patriots! Most of them were in rags. Many had no shoes. All of them needed a civilized haircut. Those beards! But the bronzed faces commanded respect. The crowd was silent.

As the procession reached the English Club somebody called for a cheer for the Boers. At first the effort seemed destined to die unborn. But the men and women on the balcony of the English clubhouse finally set the hurrahs a-going.

President Oom Paul Krüger, waiting at Lourenço Marques for the Dutch man-of-war that was to take him to Europe, watched the sad march from one of the windows of the house where he was staying. Ordinarily it took much to upset the equilibrium of his phlegmatic mind. He is said to have been overcome on this occasion, however.

For six days we lived on rice and large slabs of dried fish, which the Portuguese commissariat thought sufficient for our needs. During those six days, also, we wondered how soon the Portuguese Government would hand us over to the British Government. Would it be St. Helena, Ceylon or the Punjab?

However, the heart of the old man—of Oom Paul—had been melted. So, when it was whispered to him that possibly the men in detention might be handed over to the English, he opened his meager purse and bargained with the management of a steamship line for the passage of the Six Hundred to their respective homes. Eighty-seven of his soldiers of fortune he enabled to reach the United States, most of them Americans.

Perhaps it is not too late even now to nail an atrocious lie which has been fastened upon the mind of the public. That treasure which President Krüger is said to have carried off existed only in the minds of space-writers hard up for an interesting topic.

### MINOR ENGAGEMENTS

IT IS not likely that the Captain of the *Lissa* will ever forget the Six Hundred. I don't see how he could.

President Krgüer's purse being lean, he was obliged to do the best he could. That best consisted of securing for the Six Hundred two cargo-holds on the steamer named. The accommodation offered made the steerage look palatial indeed. However, the mattresses hired by the Captain of the *Lissa* for the occasion, and hay pillows, were surprisingly soft to men who had come to detect softness even in the hard ground of the Veld. Even the food tasted well for a day, especially when the bill of fare of rice and dried fish, and dried fish and rice, of the Portuguese barracks was remembered.

But men tire of such things. Two days out from Lourenço Marques the pathetic little Madagascar steers with their humpbacks failed to appease the palate of the Six Hundred. The poor animals walked from their pens almost into the large pots on deck, in which "soldiers' stew" was cooked for breakfast, dinner and supper. To make matters worse, they were little more than skin and bone, and so hungry that they would have felt no scruples at turning cannibals.

It is no joke to subsist on fare of that sort—less so when there is hardly enough to go around.

By the time Zanzibar had been reached the Six Hundred were in a lovely frame of mind. Some of the more enterprising spirits had seriously considered taking the *Lissa* into their own hands, turning her nose to the west, making a landing at Inhambane, Sofala or even Beira, and then rejoining the Boer forces in the Northern Transvaal.

Those were anxious moments for the skipper of the *Lissa* and the few first- and second-class passengers.

At Zanzibar the first installment of trouble came. Slowly the *Lissa* was making her way into the roadstead, zigzagging between shoals and coral reefs like a man who has spilled a packet of tacks in a dark room while in his bare feet.

In the maneuvers incident to this, the *Lissa* passed first a French school-frigate with several hundred naval cadets aboard. Somebody on the *Lissa* hoisted the *Vierkleur* on the aft mast. The young Frenchmen, wholly forgetful of the recent *rapprochement*, cheered lustily and long.

Farther on a British vessel had to be passed. She proved to be a cable-ship, then busy making repairs on some lines in the Indian Ocean. Catcalls and jeers greeted the *Vierkleur* this time. Not that the Six Hundred were silent. Far from it. The complimentary remarks that passed back and forth as the two tubs almost

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rubbed sides with one another flavored strongly of Billingsgate, and were entirely inharmonious with that good feeling which had generally existed on the battlefield.

To the shame of the Six Hundred be it said that several of them were taken into custody by the Zanzibar police before noon. However, even the Zanzibarites sympathized with the Boers, so it seemed. What is more likely is that the law-and-order department of the Sultan was glad when the *Lissa* sailed and took the men along.

So long had these members of the Six Hundred gone dry that a real chance at *vino tinto* was more than they could overlook.

But things reached a climax on that day, as the *Lissa* slowly threaded her way out of the roadstead. That English cable-ship had to be passed.

A little before, some of the Six Hundred, still burning with indignation and resentment at having been called hands-uppers, had quietly slipped into the bunkers of the *Lissa* and procured ammunition. Most of them were glad that they had done so. Just as the *Lissa* slid past the cable-ship, somebody broke a bed-sheet from the latter's main truck.

It was surprising how quickly the deck of the cable-ship was cleared. The crew, unprepared for the onslaught, saw the hail of coal-lumps coming and sought shelter in the deck houses. I don't know what the damage done to glass amounted to. But it must have been considerable.

Meanwhile the Captain of the *Lissa*, an excitable little Italian, was doing a Highland fling on the bridge, gesticulating as hard as he could.

There were more cheers as the French school-ship was passed, and then the *Lissa* headed northeast by east, toward Aden and the Red Sea.

But the Six Hundred had tasted the excitement of battle. It was hard on the cabin passengers that such was the case.

That night somebody broke into the bakery of the steamer and purloined all the fresh rolls which had been intended for the breakfast of the good men and women who dwelt on the hurricane deck. That same night, also, the kitchen and pantry were inspected—with surprising results. Roasted chickens, boiled hams, loins of mutton, cans of caviar, other titbits, and what not found their way into the hold of the *Lissa* in a most mysterious fashion.

Somebody found out where wine could be had, and another suggested that it might be well to try the lock of the little cabin under the poop-deck, where the chief steward had stored many bottles of beer, which he was retailing to the thirsty ones at a profit that was altogether atrocious.

The course of the *Lissa* that night was well marked with empty bottles, diving from portholes almost flush with the water-line.

When the last traces of the sumptuous but clandestine repast had been eliminated, everybody sought the comfort of the mattresses and hay pillows. Many vowed that they had eaten the first square meal in years.

That skipper of the *Lissa* was roused early next morning. First the baker reported. The rolls and all the bread had gone. What would become of the cabin passengers? He could not bake quickly enough to supply new rolls for the breakfast. What the Captain said is not recorded, but it has been held that he exhausted the dictionaries of three or four languages.

A little later the chef appeared on the bridge, accompanied by the chief steward, who had been roused. It was the same story.

And then a horrible thought broke over the chief steward. Down the ladder he rushed, slid across the hurricane deck, almost fell down the companionway to the deck below, and then dodged through a crowd of early risers—members of the Six Hundred.

Through the alleyway under the poop came wails. Some of the Six Hundred bent over the bulwarks, looked in the water of the Indian Ocean, and snickered. The chief steward kept on wailing. The harder he wailed, the harder shook the bodies of the Six Hundred.

There were tears in many eyes when the chief steward, with an eye to business, asked whether those present knew anything of this outrage. None did, it seemed. On the verge of nervous collapse, the chief steward staggered back to the bridge and held palaver with the Captain.

To the credit of the cabin passengers be it said that they did not hold an indignation meeting when breakfast had to be postponed an hour. Many of them taking it for granted that the Six Hundred were responsible for the raid on their culinary departments, agreed that men could not live day

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in, day out, on Madagascar oxen and not try experienced hands at commandeering.

### MOSTLY ABOUT EATS—AND DRINKS

ADEN was reached in due time. The Captain of the *Lissa* no longer took any chances. None of the Six Hundred were permitted to go ashore.

But the stay in the Aden roadstead was not to be without its incident. One of the American soldiers of fortune had bought a silk handkerchief from a coolie merchant. They had bartered for a long time over the price, and when finally the coolie made change he essayed one of the ordinary tricks of the East. But the man from the States refused to be short-changed and said so. Conscious of the fact that, nominally anyway, he was a British subject in a British port, and dealing with an enemy of his Queen, the coolie tried uppishness. But before he had said much he found himself sailing through space, and the next moment he was taking a bath when he did not want it.

The ensuing hubbub was great. The Captain announced it as his intention to put every last one of the Six Hundred in irons. Somebody doubted audibly that there would be irons enough to go around.

That skipper had a lot of tact and discretion about his person, after all. Rather than press the point at issue he concluded to go to the bridge. But he sent home, within the next hour or so, a little cable which averred that he had on board the worst band of pirates that ever went unhanged.

Up at Port Said more trouble came. Thanks to the intercession of some one the Captain decided to let the Six Hundred go ashore while the *Lissa* filled her bunkers.

In that naughty little city by the canal the Six Hundred found no end of sympathizers. The result was that most of them were treated liberally in English bars, French cafés, and other places of entertainment.

It so happened that there was in port a Japanese man-of-war. When the *Lissa* slipped through the basins, other craft saluted her. Why, may be hard to explain. The fact is that the Six Hundred typified at that hour the end of a republic—sad fate of the under-dog—and those who were not obliged to show more caution than sentiment promptly hoisted and dipped colors. But the *Yatasura*, or whatever her name was, could not do so—for good reasons. First, because she was a man-of-war; secondly, because her Government was an ally of Great Britain.

The Six Hundred remembered this wrathfully. Three of them happened across some Jap sailors on shore-leave, and ju-jutsu did not avail. Had it not been that some policemen appeared on the scene in time a Coroner's inquest might have become decidedly apropos.

Though the skipper was no longer on speaking terms with any of the Six Hundred, and took none of them into his confidence, it is safe to say that he was glad when the *Lissa* entered upon the last leg of her trip. By that time, too, he had come to understand one or two things. One of them was that men can not live on Madagascar "beef" for any length of time and not become grumpy. So at Port Said he laid in a store of some other meat. There were two Madagascar humpbacks left when he reached his home port. It should be possible to find them in the Vienna Zoölogical Gardens.

So one morning the capes of Creta were passed to the left, and a little later the bald peak of Zante appeared on the right. Then came Cephalonia and Ithaca.

### SOME SIDE-LIGHTS ON HOMER

IN THE bow of the *Lissa*, on a bale of rope, stood a soldier of fortune who knew more college and university professors than any other man may have ever known. For years he had killed time by migrating from one seat of learning to another. Not that he sought knowledge for the sake of making an easy living ultimately. Not that! He was a philosopher who learned for the sake of learning, and who drank just enough to get those mellow moods in which wisdom is best corelated after it has been assimilated.

"To the right of you, gentlemen," he said—I am quoting more or less accurately—"lies the island from which went forth, and to which returned, the great Ulysses, in a way our great prototype. On yonder hill—that bare one just a little behind you now—his son Telemachus herded swine while papa was away in distant lands, razing the sacred walls of the city of Troy, and holding sweet communion with Calypso.

"I should say that Pallas hit the crest of

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that mountain over there—that seems to be the highest—when she descended to have palaver with Telemachus.

"See that cliff over there? Well, they say on Ithaca that when Pallas put in appearance the swine of Telemachus stampeded and went right over it. I am afraid that I would do the same did Athena look me up thus unexpectedly. Sniffing around universities is not protection against apparitions.

"No, thank you, I have not had them recently.

"Now, yonder hill was the site of the palace of Penelope. I mean the one straight up from the house near the water's edge. Yes, that's the one. The one with the bald pate and the dark fringe of green around the edge. Looks somewhat like my head—bald in the middle.

"It was there that Penelope waited for seven years or so for her own beloved Ulysses. It was there also where sonny Telemachus shooed off the insistent suitors of her ladyship. And there it was where Euryclea spotted Ulysses by the size of his bunions. Homer puts it thus—the lady was giving Ulysses' feet a wash they needed so much:

"Deep in his knee, inseamed, remained the scar:
Which noted token of the woodland war
When Euryclea found, ablution ceased;
She dropped the leg—his foot lands in the jar
And soap-suds scatter wide and far.
Smiles dewed with tears the pleasing strife expressed
Of grief and joy, alternate in her breast.
Her fluttering words in melting murmurs died;
As—'Welcome home, you bum,' she cried.

The material soul of the skipper, having failed to understand why Ithaca could be of so much interest to the Six Hundred, smelled trouble. But the Second Officer, who was sent to investigate, came too late. However, the mind of the Captain had been overworked, and it is likely, therefore, that he scented a plot to beach the steamer on the Albanian coast and then have the Six Hundred take to the mountains.

### WHAT THE DOZEN DID

THE authorities at Trieste, duly acquainted with the reputation of the Six Hundred, had taken elaborate precautions. Some maintained that the Austrian army had been mobilized. To the writer this has always seemed gratuitous slander. Only the police reserves of Trieste had been called out. These good guardians of the peace had stationed themselves about the dock, and had fully made up their mind that after all it was noble to die in the defense of one's country.

But after the cabin passengers had been landed somebody slipped the hawsers of the *Lissa* off the timbers, and slowly the old tub began to back her way out of the dock.

Then and not till then did all the sins of the Six Hundred loom up in ghastly reality. What was that Captain going to do?

Out in the bay the steamer nosed down the Adriatic. The Six Hundred were dumbfounded, speechless, crushed—flabbergasted! But that skipper knew that he had the protection of the guns in the harbor-defense works. The Six Hundred knew it, too.

A little later the steamer cast anchor opposite a little island that seemed literally to teem with fortifications. From a watergate in a long blank wall issued a little steam tug, towing a barge.

To make a long story short, all members of the Six Hundred not subjects of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, pledged themselves in the office of the Commandant of the fort that they would not linger longer on Austrian soil than they could possibly manage. The man behind the table explained in the most dulcet Viennese accents that train connections in the Empire, from Trieste to Graz, thence to Vienna and Prague and the German Empire, were the very best, and that he expected, as did his Government, that this condition be put to the greatest possible test by the Six Hundred. The train would leave in the morning.

Back to the pier the steamer churned her way. The Six Hundred were crestfallen.

However, the good people of Trieste were sure that the Six Hundred were not so bad as they had been painted. They turned out in a body to fête the gallant fighters. Every member of the Six Hundred had at least two hosts, and few of the patriots slept that night. That but few of the men could make themselves understood did not seem to matter.

At two A. M., I saw a very orderly Cape rebel pinned against the wall of the Trieste cathedral by three hilarious citizens who insisted that he tell them the story of Spion Kop. But while a Trieste Austrian may glean some intelligence of the South African

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Taal as it is printed, he would have to be a mind-reader to understand a word of it as it is spoken. So the three hilarious citizens asked questions with their faces and hands, received similar answers, and enjoyed themselves hugely.

Unfortunately, the C. R. spied me as I dodged behind one of the little kiosks on which they paste their advertisements in Austria. He drew the attention of the three citizens to me and then escaped. Being still a good sprinter, with a splendid training on the Veld, I, too, managed to elude them. I doubt very much that the story of Spion Kop is known to the three hilarious citizens even now.

Happily, something had gone wrong on the *Kaiserlich-Königliche Oesterreichische Staatsbahn*. The train could not pull out on schedule, and that enabled us to get the Six Hundred together. I believe that three or four of them were left behind at that.

There being no dining-car on the local which showed us the Styrian Alps at a mile-in-three-minutes clip, the Six Hundred had to eat its noon meal at a little station half way between Trieste and Graz. The conductor had informed me that the train would stop twenty minutes and that the men would have to eat in a hurry.

They did so in all cases where this was possible, but some of them were not served quick enough. The result was that when the engineer began to toot anxiously, the Six Hundred rushed out of the dining-room and most of them failed to pay.

Rather than be left behind in that inhospitable land, the men took a chance at beating the restaurant-keeper. That worthy man was in despair. But even in Austria a railroad schedule is of more importance than a few paltry gulden. The train pulled out. As it negotiated a sharp curve, I noticed that the man in the white apron was still wringing his hands and showing other signs of the greatest agitation.

For the sake of the Six Hundred, three of us collected what moneys were due him and took a receipt for the total from the conductor.

All day long we trundled through the autumnal Alps.

At sunset we came to Graz, military center of Central Austria. To this point only the better part of the Six Hundred's fame had penetrated. The depot was crowded with army officers and civilians, all of them anxious to get a look at the fighters from the Veld.

It even seemed that the undesirables of Trieste had become heroes at Graz. Some of the women had brought flowers with them, and there is not the slightest doubt that those of the Six Hundred who had wisely paid a visit to the barbers along the route of their hegira were now glad that they had done so.

It is an ill wind that blows nobody good. The Portuguese authorities at Lourenço Marques had obligingly confiscated, or seized, if that be a better way of putting it, a consignment of uniforms intended for the Boer army. When the Six Hundred marched into Lourenço Marques almost naked, these had been distributed to them.

So now at least the men looked presentable.

There was a rather smart cut about the clothing, and the overcoat looked decidedly military. I am afraid that the military experts of Graz gathered an impression of the Boer army that will never fit accounts of the true state of affairs in matters sartorial.

At Vienna the Six Hundred dwindled to a hundred or so. Already the Austrian soldiers of fortune and those who came from the Balkan States, Russia and Italy, had been left behind. Now the Frenchmen, Swiss, Germans and Hollanders took their leave, as did also those Cape rebels who intended to find new homes in Holland.

When the train pulled out for Prague, the remnant of the lone Hundred consisted mostly of Americans, a score of Irishmen, a dozen Cape rebels and the writer.

### STILL TRAVELING

WHAT sort of treatment the Hundred would get in Germany seemed highly problematical. A news agency had spread a report that was grossly unfair to the men, even to those who had done their best to make it disagreeable for the greater number to whom return to peace did not seem an event that had to be celebrated in boisterous fashion.

Being the only member of the Hundred who could speak German, leadership devolved upon me in all matters that made a knowledge of that language germane. Those matters proved vexatious and great in number before the end came.

When the German conductor informed

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me that the Hundred, though holding a right to third-class transportation only, would be given second-class accommodation, I frankly stared in his face—I fear, with mouth agape. Though the treatment given the Six Hundred by the Austrians had not been severe, we had been shown no favors and had been given to understand that our room was more desirable than our company. To become in a manner the guests of the German State railroads, to the extent of the difference in fare paid and accommodation offered, was rather unusual, to say the least.

But the man insisted that those were his orders. Asked where these instructions came from, he had nothing to say.

One of the Leipzig-Magdeburg expresses was speeding along the valley of the Elbe at a lively clip. I knew that the train was to make only one stop, and that had been made.

Of a sudden the train came to a halt with a jar that sent one of the Hundred in my compartment to his knees. Looking out of the window I noticed that the train crew was running up and down the track and testing air-brakes.

After some difficulty the seat of the trouble was located. It developed that one of the Hundred had taken it into his head to discover what would happen if he manipulated a small lever over the back of his seat. The man was drunk, and before his companions could tell him that he was about to apply the emergency brake, he had torn off the lead seal and thrown the lever over.

With a sour mien the conductor took the matter up with me. I promised to keep the man in check. But the talking he received was lost. Hardly had the train gotten under way again, when the same thing occurred.

"*Es ist verboten*" evidently had no terrors to this man. The conductor told him that he would have to pay a fine or go to jail. However, the matter was smoothed over.

When the Hundred changed trains at Magdeburg, the hundredth had a pair of black eyes that looked more like a domino mask than anything else.

That was a lively week at Hamburg. The Hundred was kept busy keeping a dozen out of trouble. Three provosts had appointed themselves, and when the telephone-bell in the hotel rang, one of them would take his hat and spring to police headquarters. He knew that one of the weak sisters had been arrested again.

The stern German police officials seemed to have melted into weak women. The Captain at one of the stations almost begged with tears in his eyes that the subject who had given him most trouble be placed under restraint. There was nothing else to do.

But the restraint should have been applied in a jail. The hotel-room was not exactly the *locale* for the undertaking.

From the fourth floor of the hostelry came the noise of violent disturbance. A window-pane went crashing to the street. A pitcher followed it, and a wash-basin was a close second.

Pandemonium ensued. The poor hotelkeeper was sure that the crazy man was tearing down the building. Knowing its man, the Hundred thought that if he persisted at the job that would be the extent of his operations. So up the stairs—there was no elevator—flew the Hundred.

The man had just dismantled the bed and was now using part of it to break down the locked door. Just as the first panel gave way the Hundred reached the landing. After that things moved with a rapidity that would have been a joy to a moving-picture-manager.

Physical inability prevented that member of the Hundred from being the cause of further anxiety.

Still there were others who gave trouble. One of them had kissed the chambermaid. No doubt that is often done by men not soldiers of fortune. But in this case the chambermaid objected.

The good woman—she had seen forty Summers if she had lived a day—was irate and inconsolable. She intended bringing suit. What to do was a problem!

It had been voiced about that some of the prominent citizens of Hamburg, a few Senators included, would give the Hundred a banquet, just to remind England of the little trade-animosities that existed.

To get John Bull's goat in that manner looked very inviting to the Hundred. Alas, the "rep" of the Hundred reached Hamburg just in time to call off the banquet, at which everybody could make a speech, seeing that Hamburg uses English with almost the same ease as it does German.

Incensed were the Hundred. For the sake of a dozen the entire company was sufffering.

The next offer of social distinction was

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made by a circus-manager, who wanted the Hundred, just as it was, to join his organization and tour Europe in a Boer-War show.

That good man, however, did not know who this Hundred was. He found out all too soon. There were Senators' sons, mining-engineers with reputations not related to the hegira, serious gentlemen who might partake of purloined victuals to placate a stomach sick of Madagascar beef, but who would not think of breaking into a pantry; and a whole crowd of youngsters who looked upon the sawdust ring with proper disdain.

Hamburg had been painted a lurid red in spots when finally the day of sailing came.

### HOME

WITH that came more trouble.

One of the great liners was to take the Hundred to the United States—second-class, it was understood. The fact that the tickets had been handled by an agency making a business of that sort of thing had left the Hundred in ignorance of what was coming.

The liner was out in the mouth of the Elbe when the Hundred boarded it.

One of the assistant pursers took the company in tow, along long decks, down a companionway, along other decks, more stairs, more decks, and more ladders.

That we were below the water line when our guide finally stepped aside was clear. It was just as painfully obvious that we were in the steerage. The hold had been partitioned off, and through the thin boards came a babble that would raise hair on the baldest pate. What the smell would have done is hard to say. Sent against a firing-line it would have annihilated the last man.

"Umph!" said somebody. It was the man who had been put under restraint in the hotel. "I'll scuttle this tub if I don't get any better than this."

The Hundred knew that he was equal to the job, provided he could get to the sea-valves. What is more, some feared that he would find the said valves, to the discomfort of everybody.

In the end it was decided to lay the matter before the purser, and, if need be, the Captain.

But that purser had a cold glint in his eye. He informed the Grievance Committee of the Hundred that steerage was the accommodation paid for, and that steerage it would be all the way to New York.

Upon the Committee it dawned that the Hundred was not dealing with any skipper of an East African tub, and caution was therefore urged.

When the Committee arrived in the lower regions, after having held converse with two pretty Polish girls, some sailor had served supper. Ye gods and little fishes!

The little fishes were there. They were swimming, though dead, in the strongest brine that herring-packers ever poured on the little fishes to keep them from that utter dissolution which comes to dead fish.

Obligingly the sailor man had removed the head from the barrel. The wood was salt-encrusted. He who had been restrained took one of the herrings by the tail and hit the sailor man in the eye. It took much cajoling to get the sailor to forget the affront and proceed with the business in hand.

When next he descended the steep ladder, he carried a basket of boiled potatoes with their overshoes on. Ordinarily such "spuds" are said to be in the jacket. Not these! The skin defied all efforts to be punctured, let alone come off.

While the sailor man was gone for the next course, the hot willows of the basket filled the hold with the acrid smell of tannic acid. The same smell penetrated the potatoes.

Again the sailor man came down. This time he had a tin basin of something which, as far as the Hundred is concerned, will remain unidentified for all time. On the surface of the lake floated little pieces of pork, and large patches of grease just about to congeal. He who had been restrained took a herring and placed it gently in the lake. It went under, as any self-respecting fish would do in such cases.

The next time the sailor man put in an appearance, still rubbing the eye touched by the herring, he had two big tin pots—sprinkling-cans that had lost their business ends.

Gravely the man informed us that he would bring bread in a little while, that the lake in the tin tub was stew, that there was coffee in the two mutilated sprinkling-cans, and that the herrings did not taste bad, provided one was used to eating them. I caught a merry smile around the fellow's eye, but was not sure whether it was his own humor or the briny memory of the herring

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that was responsible for the little wrinkles that conveyed this impression.

The Grievance Committee was reinstructed by the Hundred, in meeting assembled, that it once more treat with the purser: first, for quarters away from the emigrants and their noise and smells; secondly, for better food.

The glint in the purser's eye was colder than before. The gentleman was plainly indifferent. Nor did he care what the opinion of the Hundred was. Quite incidentally he remarked that he would take the matter up with the Captain.

The Committee, to show that it had done its duty, decided to remain away from the hold of the Hundred as long as seemed consistent. This time they held converse with two pretty German girls, both of them bound for Brooklyn, N. Y.

But it seems that the purser was more interested in the Hundred than he was willing to admit. He almost reached the hold of the "century" before the committee did, and brought the cheerful news that there was a smaller steerage compartment in the bow of the vessel which the Hundred could have.

The new quarters were somewhat of an improvement, except to those subject to seasickness, as was discovered by them during the night when the liner put her nose into the choppy waters of the North Sea.

There was another slight disadvantage to the new quarters. The noise of the emigrants had been left behind, and so had the smell, but instead of these another nuisance was met. Through the center of the hold ran two steel cylinders. In these tubes hung the chains of the two big anchors at the bow of the vessel. These chains were loose.

All night long the things clanked against the sides of the steel tubes. Sleep was out of the question, and next morning the Hundred was ready for any evil deed.

But compared with the Indian Ocean, the Atlantic is a civilized sort of puddle, and soon the scuttling was forgotten. At its worst the torture could not endure longer than another week.

Just how the boys did it nobody has ever discovered; but one night certain members of the Hundred handed around big bricks of that sort of ice-cream which looks, and in November almost chews, like a chunk of marble. No questions were asked. Everybody sat up in the bunks and ate heartily.

Those who were equal to it ate a second brick; the man who had been restrained ate three, and then somebody had to rub his stomach to get the thing warm.

It appears that the refrigerator containing the ice-cream stood to one side of the companionway that led to the hold of the Hundred. The box looked as if it might contain life-preservers or holystones—anything indigestible and of no interest to hungry steerage passengers.

But the Hundred had not scouted on the Veld in vain. The second night out a reconnaissance party had been the interested spectator to the efforts of a man in a white cap and apron liberally bespattered with grease and such. This person had taken out some of the toothsome bricks, and the Hundred promptly concluded that there were more where those came from.

It is to be hoped that the first-class passengers did not suffer hardship on account of the Hundred.

Just when the absence of more ice-cream became known is not a matter of record. Subsequent inspection showed that the box was empty.

With trepidation the Hundred looked for the police flag when the New York waters were reached. It is possible that the authorities of the vessel surmised—wisely at that—that it would lead to no purpose to say anything of the episode of the ice-cream, and sundry other little matters.

On a Hoboken pier United States Custom Inspectors went through the baggage of the Hundred. In a way the inspection was pathetic enough. All the Hundred owned was a pair of socks or two, a brush, comb, and razor. But assiduously the minions of the Treasury chalked the newspaper parcels. By changing money back and forth the Hundred—or, better, the immigrant contingent of the Hundred—managed to just squeeze in.

On that dreary November morning the end of the hegira looked disheartening enough. But in the Barge Office there was waiting an old man with gray hair, a peppery beard and two of the warmest eyes man ever looked into.

"Come on, boys!" he said. "We have made arrangements for you." In the old Vanderbilt Hotel, now no more, the Hundred ate the first square meal in many a day, and then disbanded.

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# The Probationer

by Carrington Boykin

BESIDES commanding a battalion of New York City's fire-extinguishing apparatus, "Smoky Jim" Duffy was a medal man. The left sleeve of his trim blue blouse displayed three coveted bits of bronze, metal reminders of moments when he had imperiled his existence for others; for when it came to plunging through the infernos that frequently erupt volcano-like in lower Manhattan, he could have made pikers out of every one short of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who staged the original fire-defying act under the auspices of King Nebuchadrezzar. Unlike these gentlemen, however, Duffy did not come forth unscathed from his immersions in flame; his uniform concealed a score of scars, and his right cheek wore a horseshoe-shaped cautery, the result of a back draft in a Broome Street tenement.

As a fire-fighter he was fearless yet thoughtful, never ordering his men where he dared not venture himself; and if the chances of return were slender, and some one must go, he went alone—a smoke-eater from boots to helmet, crawling through fire like a salamander. Nevertheless, had a man of his demurred when he roared his harsh commands, he would have felled the dawdler in a twinkle, understanding better than those under him the caprices of fire, sending no man on a fool's mission.

In the fire house he was a tyrant. His exactions smacked of Draco, and he swore well nigh inconceivable oaths at those about him, but they gave him unhesitating, though ofttimes sullen, obedience, because they knew his heart was with them, that his iron hand and whipping tongue were merely rough veneer. He was alternately loved and abominated. Twenty-odd years of clangoring, precarious duty amid smoke, flames, falling walls, and the other pitfalls of his vocation had hoisted him as if atop a slowly ascending extension ladder, through grade after grade, to his present commission.

He was a powerful man, fashioned for a fighter of the bruiser type, and his massive, undershot jaw and cold gray eyes proclaimed that it mattered not what his opponent —man, beast, or blaze. And to warrant the assertion, with drives from his sledge-hammer fists he had crumpled more than one man on the brick floor of the fire-house, had suppressed a dozen or more who had tampered with his despotism. With one touch from his rock-like knuckles he could quell the unruly, bring the most mutinous to taw.

Yet with all its drawbacks he liked it, this business of breaking men as men break horses, and he gloried in his results therefrom. He trained them as he had been trained in the old Department, made of



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them human beings unafraid, called them his boys, taught them to hate fire, not to fear it, and to fight it as they would sin. He manufactured men, forged and tempered them as the smith does his steel, taught them to look at death undaunted, and to regard the Grim Reaper as a bystander, not a menace.

Pasha though he was, veteran of a thousand fires, grizzled old bachelor with hair as gray as granite, no father was ever more proud of his children than Duffy of his men. And they knew it; he had told them so; and again and again, rallied by his voice booming like a fog-horn above the roar and crackle of flames, they had followed him where hell's reddest recesses were rivaled. He had garnered them as he would rare jewels, exorbitant in his demands, sifting and winnowing each batch of probationers sent him until he found those that suited him; acid-testing each man, unflagging, serious in his search for the flaw so fatal to the fireman—the streak of yellow, the fear of flame that's inborn, ineradicable, and that must crop out when skilfully sought for.

He knew how to feed these yellow worms that reside in milk-livered mortals, how to glut them with the fire they dreaded, arouse them from their torpor, and drive them cowering to the light. And for that reason some said he read men as he did books.

WHEN this chronicle opens, the month of March had its cold fangs buried deep in New York's flanks, and on this particular morning a raw, biting wind swept across the East River, piercing one's marrow like a cold acid. Smoky Jim Duffy, Battalion Chief, sank his stalwart frame into the swivel-chair before the desk on the second floor of the fire-house of Engine Company 78 in Great Jones Street, and scowled at the world. A false alarm at daybreak with the thermometer crowding zero, and a stubborn two-alarm blaze in a West Broadway cellar two hours later, where he received an overdose of smoke, had thoroughly irritated him, rendering him as unapproachable as a rattlesnake for the rest of the day. Interjecting tugs with seasonable oaths, he laboriously removed his heavy regulation rubber boots, shied them under his white iron bed, and, standing in his stocking feet, he began to unbutton his reeking blouse.

It was past ten o'clock when Steamer 78, the powerful American fire-pump, dragged by three hungry iron-grays, clanged her way back to her home in Great Jones Street, accompanied by her consort, the hose-wagon. Duffy in his buggy had preceded her by some minutes, and as he hung his blouse on a hook in his room adjoining the dormitory, he heard the ponderous machine backing into her berth, and he quickly howled down for the Company to get busy and clean up.

The fact that no one had breakfasted was secondary to the knowledge that the apparatus was as grimy as three hours of fire-fighting could make it; but this exaction was inflexible—no grub until "Old Sal," as the steamer was affectionately dubbed, was spick and span as a new pin; and nothing except an order bearing the Commissioner's signature could have altered it. Satisfied that his orders were in execution, Duffy then shoved his cold feet into a pair of woolen slippers presented to him by a flaxen-haired miss of eight years, whose parents resided in the tenement across the street, and strode to a locker to get a sweater.

As his hand rummaged among the various articles of apparel hung there, several high-pitched voices told him that there was a squabble in the Company downstairs; and forthwith his dander began to rise, what with his bellyful of smoke instead of breakfast and the frosty, unpleasant atmosphere around him. Intent upon quashing the disturbance at its very inception, and angered that a man dare trifle with his orders, he stalked to the nearest slide-pole shaft and looked down.

"Hey, you —— loafers," he thundered down in deafening tones. "Choke that noise and get to work!"

There was silence instantly, as if it had come from the skies—profound silence throughout the house, save for the grays munching their oats, until Duffy returned to don his sweater; and then the buzz commenced again, only louder than before. Taunted by this ostensible buffet to his authority, his ill humor boiled. He chucked the sweater aside as if it were a garment of fire, and, clad in trousers and undershirt, he made for the stairway.

The men heard his heavy footfalls; they sounded like sacks of salt dropping to the floor; and just as he reached the head of



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the stairs, once again did silence fall over the Company, and activity ran amuck of a sudden, Old Sal groaning under the severity of it. But Duffy made no pause until he had half descended the iron stairway that snaked down the west wall of the house; and then he halted, much after the fashion of Old Sal when she drew up after a long run to a fire. His perch commanded the entire floor; every man came into his vision. For several seconds he stood there motionless, red-faced, his deep chest heaving, his hairy arms akimbo, frowning upon the industrious Company, before he released the gathering storm of his wrath.

"You whelps!" he bellowed with more than his usual ferocity, shaking one of his huge fists at the culprits. "If I come down there, I'll flatten the whole of you. I'll drop you, and they'll back an ambulance to the door and cart you to the hospital. Now shut your tongues!"

As this torrent of displeasure pealed through the building, the Chief's eye fell on Williams, a fireman standing in the driver's seat polishing Old Sal's boiler; and he noted what he assumed to be a sneering curl of the subordinate's lower lip. The bare thought stung him like a whiplash, even tingling the tips of his ears that so much resembled a turkey's wattles.

WILLIAMS was a probationer, an unfledged fireman, a man on approval, whose admission to the Department depended upon Duffy's recommendation. Furthermore, Williams was a brawny American, large-boned, fair-haired, with the face of a boy rather than of a man—a young giant of twenty-eight years recruited through the Civil Service from the upper reaches of the city, whom Duffy had long suspected as being cankered by an incurable streak of yellow and whom he consequently detested. Duffy had assiduously sought to uncover this saffron defect, trawling like a fisherman through the youngster's soul on every occasion; and though Williams had assayed one hundred per cent. backbone in every test, the old Chief was persuaded that some day he would show funk, and therefore withheld his endorsement.

Duffy never lost sight of the fact that faint hearts often inhabit sturdy bodies. Only that morning he had kept the fireman, without a single trip to the outside for air, submerged in a cellar where the pungent smoke gnawed at his throat like steel teeth; but Williams had said nothing, sticking leech-like to the nozzle. So the probationer, baffling research, became an eyesore that stung the old gladiator whenever he looked at him; and the insolent grin that he now thought parted the corners of the young man's mouth touched the match to the waiting pyre, almost choking the old stickler with rage.

Sputtering like a pot of burning sulfur, he stamped down the few remaining steps. But a swift, visible metamorphosis overtook him as his feet touched the floor; for when Duffy advanced to administer what he considered merited discipline his face whitened and lost its redness instantly, and his gray eyes became arctic—the calm before the storm. Duffy understood how to cool himself before riding rough-shod over men. And all who saw it recognized the mood at its genesis. He stopped beside Old Sal's right front wheel, his arms dangling like a couple of war-clubs.

"Climb down from that seat, you puppy," he rasped at the offender. "You're that yellow 'tis running out of your mouth. You need a lesson. Git down!"

Every hand in the house was stayed and all eyes were directed at Williams, who with a suggestion of bravado tossed his sponge into the cleaning-box and clambered down. However, if Duffy expected the yellow streak to break cover at this juncture when his obvious intentions were those of reducing some portion of Williams's countenance to a pulp, he was disappointed. He was, nevertheless, pleased to see the youngster coming toward him, fists tightly balled in anticipation of the mill; and at the same time he realized that future discipline in the Company necessitated a dramatic and disastrous finale to this brazen mutineer.

Hostilities were in no wise delayed, the two squaring off at a yard; and Engine Company 78 to a man deserted their tasks of burnishing Old Sal and formed a semicircle about the disputants. For a quarter minute the two men sparred gently, feeling out, looking for an opening—the old swashbuckler, he who had been breaking men for a decade, circling around his younger opponent nimbly as a pugilist, crouching like a monster panther before its leap. But Williams was no sluggard; he understood several things in the art of fisticuffs—an

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uppercut introduced by McCoy, a plexus punch *à la* Fitzsimmons, and a jab of his own coinage—and he coolly bided his time, the while watching every pass made by the two piledriver paws that spanked the air in front of him.

A half minute slipped by, punctuated with footwork and feints, and then came the inevitable. Out of a swirl of arms the Chief suddenly sidestepped to the right, shifted his guard with lightning speed—his only, but infallible, trick—and closed on his man like a hard-driven wedge. Williams saw it, but too late. In a trice Duffy's left hand had blocked the other's guard, beaten it down by sheer force, and his big right fist, propelled by every ounce of energy in his body, had started for Williams's unprotected jaw.

It had but two feet to travel, but it gathered a frightful momentum along the short route, and covered the distance in negligible time, coming foul of the fireman's chin like a boulder flung from a catapult, shooting his head upward, almost lifting him from his feet. The spectators gasped and fell back a pace, apprehensive that the fury might need to spend itself elsewhere. They had seen Duffy lay on men before; several of them had likewise run the gantlet of his bludgeons. But this latest feat overran all others.

There was no return fight. Williams's senses were floundering; the heavy impact had transmitted a concussion to his brain that turned things black before him, paralyzed his muscles — a clean knockout. Duffy's fist had recoiled for a second blow, but as he saw the probationer's hands drop he backstepped promptly, knowing that the companionless punch had inscribed another name on his list of broken men.

"Catch him; he's had enough," he snapped to the men behind Williams as the latter, reeling, semiconscious, gave way at the knees.

Duffy was calm and unsmiling. He was never inhuman in the methods of proclaiming his authority, having learned to differentiate with finesse between chastisement and actual brutality—a point where most disciplinarians trip—and he always varied the severity of the punishment with the case in hand. Some trainers of his type make no discrimination. At a nod from Duffy, some one brought a pail of water and bathed the face of the dazed man, at the same time washing away the little stream of blood that trickled from the left corner of his mouth; and two minutes later he was able to stand alone, though still pale and shaky, holding to one of Old Sal's wheels.

The Chief regarded his adversary with eyes brimful of honest pity; for he never gloated over his conquests, viewing them as unavoidable incidents of his *régime*, not triumphs. And always, after injecting respect into an insurgent with the aid of his potent pair of fists, he wondered why the man had been fool enough to invoke such drastic treatment. He was glad, however, for the spunk wherewith Williams had absorbed his punishment, and he marveled that the yellow streak still lay hidden.

"Now git back to your jobs, you pups, for you don't eat till you finish," he snarled to the men clustered about Williams. "And for you, you young hound," he said, directing his gaze at his squelched antagonist, whose woful appearance was augmented by the dirty uniform he still wore, "you've had a —— good lesson; ought to last. And if it don't, there's another in these—" here he held out his ugly fists—"any time you feel the need. And I guess you know who's Chief in this house; and maybe now you won't smile when I tell you to hold your mouth. Seems none of you can learn any sense. Now tell me what you were quarreling over when I told you to quit."

Williams wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and the resulting blood-smear startled him. His jaw had begun to ache, reminding him that both talking and mastication would be difficult and painful for at least a week; and he sorely felt like renouncing his job, taking French leave of New York and its Fire Department.

But most of all he would have relished a couple of wallops at his Chief's phiz. Discouragingly aware of precedents in the firehouse, he had expected annihilation, but not in such cyclonic form, having hoped beforehand to postpone it long enough to record his overthrow on the scarred visage. And at one time during his journey from the driver's seat there had actually, though feebly, flickered the thought that he might possibly master the old corsair.

"What was the rumpus about?" repeated the Chief. "Anything holding your tongue now?"

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"Murder," answered Williams bluntly, as he raised his eyes from the floor.

"What sort?" demanded Duffy, tucking his thumbs under his belt. "Cats, dogs, mice, or men?"

"Men," replied the fireman. "Homicide, they calls it in the courts." His jaw tortured him with every word. "Me and Heine was arguing—he says there ain't any justified murder, 'cept self-defense, and I took the opposite."

"And what do the two of you know about it?" questioned Duffy sharply. "You and that big cheese-faced Dutchman better find something you know about. There's only one sort, and I'll spread it around here if you don't close your faces when I order you. That's justified. What other kind do you know?"

The probationer delayed his answer, and though Duffy glared at him, he looked straight ahead, lips compressed, a full minute elapsing before he spoke; and for the brief period his face was a playground of emotions. The Company grew restless, expecting each moment to see Duffy's fists leap into action.

"'TWAS the night the Carver Building was touched off in Spring Street," he began in a low voice, composed though scarcely audible, "and Old Sal with the Company behind her rolls out 'bout two in the morning—the same night that Rex broke his off trace, and we nearly smacked a dozen arc lights before George drew in at the plug. I was a probationer some two months, and you'd told me to ride the steamer that night. Guess you remember—four alarms and a wind that almost tore our clothes off, and when we gets there she looks like a volcano in full bloom. Some fire; my first big one.

"We made great time; started our water before 76 reaches her plug, and right off you sent me and Heine and another man up a fire-escape and through a third-floor window with a nozzle. But we didn't stay there long—too hot. Got blistered as it was; and then you shot us into the second floor and we struck another furnace.

"Heine and some others on the fire-escape starts to lower the hose, and I was about to back out of the Hades, when I hears a groan. We thought everybody was out, being 'twas an office building and 'twas night and the watchman was down on the sidewalk; but when that groan come along I drops to the floor, and I just could hear with all that roaring and spitting around me. Couldn't see nothing; smoke so thick you could almost bite it; only make out the fire in back.

"Anyway, I crawls about until I hears a cough; then I gets my bearings and lays my hand on a man on his back on the floor. All this time Heine and them on the fire-escape was shouting to me to come out; said you'd ordered it. And I hollers, 'Go to ——;' and Heine comes back: 'You're in —— now; better get out in a hurry,' only he trimmed it with a lot of that Dutch cussing of his.

"The poor devil on the floor was coughing something awful, and I thought the smoke had knocked him over, but he grabs my hand when I touched him, and he pulls me to him. I yells in his ear to get up—that I'd help him, and he says he can't, that he's pinned down. And he didn't tell no lie. A safe held him down; he never got a chance to tell me how it happened; most likely dropped through from one of the burned-out floors overhead, busted his shoulder, and flattened his legs to the boards like pancakes.

"He moans something to me about braining him quick—that he's in agony; so I put my shoulder to the safe. And I might as well have butted Gibraltar; that man was as good as riveted there. I needed dynamite, a derrick, or a miracle, and neither one was in sight.

"All this time the fire was edging toward me, sticking its tongues at me, and I knew the floor wouldn't stand long for that sort of thing. I crawls back to the window where Heine was still yelling for me, and I made him and another man help me; but nothing doing—that safe was there to stay, and the man, too. So Heine calls up one of those white-wings from the ambulances that come when a back-draft blew over a dozen men in the basement."

At this point Duffy glanced at Heine, who was sponging Rex's harness, and the big foreigner nodded vigorously, emitting a gurgling, "Ya-as, Chees," for he had never mastered the pronunciation of Duffy's title.

"They sent up one of those slim chaps—ambulance surgeons they calls themselves," went on Williams, "and he had enough needles and scissors to join a sewing-class. Some one on the street had jammed a

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helmet on his head and had wrapped him in a rubber coat; and when he gets to the second floor, Heine passes him through the window where I was waiting in the smoke. His nerves was flapping five hundred ways.

"I couldn't see him for the smoke, but when I grabs him by the arms and drags him to me, he was trembling like a whirligig. So I stuck my mouth to his ear and shouted to him to quit all that cavorting inside—that he didn't need it; and he came right down and told me to take him to his man. Regular smoke-eater, that boy.

"I explains the lay to him in about three seconds and he yells that he understands. Then we felt around until we finds the man again, and the chap runs his hands over him, asks a couple of questions that I didn't hear, and shouts to me that he can't work there—we must get the man out.

" 'Twas hot there,t oo; the fire was closing in on us. I knew we warn't going to move the safe, but we tries again—a hopeless job; but I'd sorter been expecting a miracle and it might have happened then when we warn't looking for it. Then he calls something to me about the man being burnt alive, and I tells him that the fellow had asked to be brained.

"When I says that the lad fished in a leather bag he'd brought with him; and before I knew what he was doing, he throws an arm about my neck, shoves one of those little syringes into my dirty hand, and shouts, 'There's enough in it to kill twenty men!' 'Twas filled with some of the stuff the doctors use, and I asks no explanations; I knew what he meant as soon as he said it.

"And there warn't time to fool about it; that hell behind us was eating up the planks like Heine does coconut pie, gorging it, and I knew if we stayed there much longer the floor'd drop and three of us'd slip over the Divide instead of the one unfortunate, for seven kinds of hell was blazing in the cellar. Then the chap loses his nerve again—went flying just like a kite, and he won't take the syringe when I tried to give it back to him.

" 'You do it, for Heaven's sake!' he yells.

"We was both kneeling beside the man, and I certainly did feel like smashing through the smoke and hanging a fist on that youngster's chin.

" 'Ain't you the doctor?' I asks.

" 'Yes, yes,' he returns, 'but I can't—I can't murder.'

"His last word chills me.

" 'Neither can I,' I answers; 'but this ain't murder, it's mercy. And besides, you can do it better'n me.'

" 'I can't, I can't.' And I got mad.

" 'It ain't real murder, you fool,' I shouts, 'and if it was, it's justified.'

" 'But I can't murder,' he whimpers; and I knows 'twas up to me to do the dirty work, because he'd blown up inside, gone all to pieces. And I swore the fire shouldn't do the killing—anything to cheat the fire.

" 'How do you work this thing?' I asks, and he shows me, his hand shaking.

" 'Stick it anywhere,' he adds, as if he was spitting the words at me.

" 'Will it kill quick?'

" 'Nothing better. For Heaven's sake, get it done and quit talking. We must get out; I can't stand——'

"And with that he topples, faints—maybe from smoke. I was half choked myself, and I had to work alone, the fire close by and raising blisters large as quarters on my face and melting the rubber on my coat and boots. With one hand I felt for the man's shoulder, found it, and ripped the shirt until I gets to the bare skin. Poor wretch, he was moaning, begging me to kill him, cut his throat, do anything to end his misery—that the safe was torturing his mashed legs and the fire was so hot.

"I bends over and asks him did he mean it, and he says he does—that he's praying now to go quick. Then he moans for me to do something so the fire won't get him. So I asks him will he forgive me if I help him, and he says he will; so with a thumb and two fingers I steers the needle, jabs it deep in the flesh, and pushes the little piston that drove the load of death into him.

"There wasn't a twitch; it must have gone straight home. I didn't wait—picks up the chap who's sprawled out, and bolts for the window, where I shoves him into the arms of Heine who's still there on the fire-escape. Just as I steps on the window ledge, the floor goes through; and with it the man, stone-dead, murdered. The papers said he was burned alive. I never told different; the chap didn't; but that man was dead before the flames got him, murdered, and the murderer justified. That's what me and Heine was arguing about."

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WILLIAMS broke off abruptly. All hands had paused and every eye was fixed on his face, now devoid of pallor. His tale had been told sincerely, dispassionately, yet graphically, dovetailing at every angle with the tragedy as all knew it; but this sudden unveiling of a chapter they had never even dreamed made a strong appeal to its hearers, and each wondered how he would have met the same situation.

Duffy was silent—a statue of thought whose gray eyes inventoried every feature of the man who had just spoken, now standing emotionless before him, his arms folded; and an eddy of conflicting thoughts whirled through the Chief's mind, disseminating doubt in every crevice. Was Williams truly a man after his own heart? Were all of the anathemas lavished upon him undeserved, and suspicions unfounded? Or was he a lying poltroon masquerading in the plumes of Hector?

Duffy had encountered men of the latter type many times, and he knew that even cowards when cornered will fight and fight well. And because of this pall of uncertainty he essayed no reply to Williams; he knew that only a strong man could have done that to which Williams laid claim.

"You've had holiday long enough," he suddenly shouted to the men who were idling at their jobs. "Git busy, —— you! And you, Williams, git back to that seat, and keep your mouth shut. Most men can learn in one lesson."

The Chief's teeth came together sharply —his unfailing peroration to advice given— and facing about, he lumbered to the stairs and went to his room.

## II

THAT night, about one-thirty, the Woodson Building blossomed out in the darkness, a stupendous pyrotechnic display that shot its red reflection far into the gloom, tipping with crimson the towers that plunge skyward in lower Manhattan. Two minutes later the gong in the dormitory of Engine Company 78 crashed a district call, and ten men rolled from warm covering to cold floor. Rubber boots and jerseys slipped on as by magic, and down the brass slide-poles, one by one, like monkeys at play, came the Company. Twenty seconds after the first stroke of the tocsin Steamer 78 and her crew were under way.

The fireman is a soldier in a ceaseless campaign; his life is forever on tap. His profession is for the most part a thankless one, wherein the salvation of human life is paramount, his own a minor consideration, an issue to be met only after he has helped others to safety. At any moment of the day or night he may be snatched from the comfort of the fire-house to court death, perhaps to embrace it.

Especially is this true in New York City, that vast acreage of tinder, where arson is epidemic, steam-heating plants eternally blowing up, highly charged electric wires continually short-circuiting, illuminating-gas exploding at all hours, and the population shamefully careless. But, strange to say, the fiercest conflagrations rage in the night time, thus doubling the peril of the fire-fighter, pitting him against a coalition—darkness and flame, the avowed enemies of his existence.

And, too, though not at all strange, these costly bonfires are confined to downtown New York, to the buildings honeycombed with sweatshops and offices; and in this region, quite naturally, the metropolis concentrates its matchless fire-brigades. In the heart of this district Smoky Jim Duffy and his inimitable Company held forth and savagely gave battle to the red invader of man's handiwork.

The night in question was one ordered direct from the North Pole, with nothing to recommend it save a young moon that modestly shrank back among the fleecy cloud-banks and peeped down through an occasional rift in the shining woolpack. In the gutters gleamed sheets of ice, like mirrors, under the light from the corner arcs, and a sharp wind clawed and bit whatever it met.

Standing on the running-board of the swaying hose-wagon as it nosed up behind Old Sal, Williams buttoned his rubber coat from knee to neck and pulled his heavy black helmet down to his ears. The probationer's jaw, stiffened by sleep, pained him when he moved it, and as his facial muscles began to contract with the cold air he thought as many needles were running through his cheek. Since his humiliation of the morning he had been sparing of speech, hardly ten words escaping his lips; and silently, gloomily, he had gone about

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his duties, yearning for a return bout with the man who had mastered him, confident that he could trounce the old despot in a second match.

In his buggy, behind a powerful roan, Smoky Jim Duffy led Old Sal by a scant twenty yards; and his eyes were fixed upon a sullen tower of smoke-curtained fire that rose toward the purple heavens in the west. He had said no more to Williams throughout the day; like the smith, he must wait until his steel cooled before he could tell its quality.

The fleeting procession raced into Broadway on two wheels, and, passing the corner, Old Sal emitted a shriek that heralded her coming far down the arcade of somber, lightless buildings. Five blocks below, the Woodson Building, its upper windows gushing fire like geysers, made day out of night —a huge torch that dispelled the obscurity, shooting its gleam far and near. Flames festooned the upper walls like gaudy bunting, made of the building a shaft garlanded in fire, and wreathed it in death that flung forked tongues into the night.

Snorting, pulsing, a-quiver like a human being, the giant engine drew up at a hydrant across the street from the burning structure in just two and one-half minutes after the gong had sounded in the fire-house —the first company to arrive, the one to bear the brunt of the fight. And from four directions came the shrill rise and fall of sirens and long blasts of whistles, announcing the approach of the remainder of Duffy's battalion. The street was filled with smoke and flying charred particles that swept by in clouds.

Duffy, white-helmeted to distinguish his rank, appraised the situation with his cold gray eyes like a general regarding an army that has suddenly flanked him; and a glance told him that the upper stories were doomed, that no amount of water less than a tidal wave could quench the furnace at the top of the building. The fire, originating probably from a defective insulation, had mushroomed speedily on the floors above the fourth and bade fair to gut them in a hurry.

The lower half of the old seven-story brick-and-wood structure—the oldest building in Duffy's district and a veritable fire trap —could be saved by prompt work, but the upper floors must be sacrificed. Already the fourth was feeding itself to the hot blast. And that night as he opened his attack and his sonorous voice hurled commands in rattling succession, Duffy determined that the probationer should undergo a last test in a crucible of fire, in the melting-pot where all things bubble to the surface.

All day the youngster had burdened his thoughts, the old Chief struggling between acceptance and disbelief of his gameness, since the old conviction that somewhere in his cap Williams wore a white feather was as hard to divorce as was the opposite to credit. And now he resolved to shelve his bias and give the lad an opportunity to come to the scratch, for surely the arena was at hand wherein the probationer could exhibit the stoutness of his soul.

Half an hour afterward, under orders intermixed with oaths, four men, rubber-coated, booted, and helmeted, dived into the Broadway entrance to the Woodson Building, dragging a line of hose that terminated with Old Sal.

"Git in there, you hellions," shouted Duffy to them as if he were a slave driver goading blacks to the toil. He lacked only a lash. "Git up those steps; there's fire above. Git in it, and yell for water. And, by ——, stay there. If you come down, I'll kill you."

The probationer's eyes met his Chief's through the ruddy glare that poured down from above, and in his breast the suppressed grudge hammered for an outlet as an overloaded reservoir struggles against its dike. He found a pair of arctic orbs, colder than the night that covered them, which drilled into his own like steel points—the eyes of the man who knows no fear, who commands and suffers no query. Duffy was strangely picturesque with the red radiance glistening on his ice-sheeted rubber coat where the spray from other hose had frozen to him.

"Git in there!" he thundered again. He caught Williams's quick glance. "Means you, too, you yellow puppy," he snarled, leveling a fist at the probationer. "Do you want some more of this? Git, —— you, git! Or I'll mash your dirty face so your mother won't know you."

Williams's teeth bit upon his lip; every fiber in his body cried out for retaliation, but he turned away, his soul afire. There was sullen compliance, such as serfs give when driven to the treadmills; and the four

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men, towing the hose behind them, disappeared into the smoky murk, followed by a string of oaths that rang louder than the fury of the fire. But Duffy was launching no futile expedition. He could not afford to waste effort at this stage; the fire was gaining on him. The fourth floor was now in full blaze; and the flames were creeping downward irresistibly, eating woodwork, twisting steel, and greedily devouring the inflammable stuffs that littered the floors they passed. And above the din Duffy flung his commands, directed attacks from neighboring buildings, and cursed men even to their ancestors.

The probationer and his companions, hauling the rubber worm, found the iron stairway that wound around the elevator shaft which was feeding oxygen to the flames like a blowpipe; and about them showered burning *débris*, some of which bounded off their helmets. The steps were slippery, rendering the ascent tedious and dangerous; for the water that splashed down from above had frozen to the iron. There was smoke, too—thick, burning smoke that knifed their throats and made them cough; and the lantern they carried flickered unsteadily, so they climbed in semi-darkness.

Silently they mounted, in lead the probationer, the man whom Duffy had publicly denounced as yellow and who was now without the pale of his fellows' approbation; they loathed a milksop as much as did their Chief, and their endorsement would follow his. On the third floor the invaders halted, illumined by the red ribbons they saw just above. One of them stumbled to a front window and bellowed down to start the water, and all four heard the answering toot from Old Sal. They waited and it came—a powerful jet, high pressure plus Old Sal's strokes, throwing two hundred gallons per minute, that made the hose writhe like a boa constrictor in agony, and turned the nozzle into a cudgel that required four men to control it.

They climbed higher until flaming swords warned them back, dared them to go farther; and into the heart of the inferno they sent Old Sal's stream hissing like an angry dragon. Scalding steam came back amid the smoke; the falling *débris* thickened, and the while the probationer wondered—wondered why Duffy thought him yellow, why Jim all but spat in his face. And with these reflections his bitterness welled out afresh.

His jaw still ached; his dismantling was yet vivid in his mind. As for the Chief, Williams longed to be at his throat. As he gripped the nozzle, kneeling beside his companions, face tucked close to the throbbing hose to shield his skin from the blistering heat, he fancied that some one had tapped the crust of the earth, releasing the fires entombed beneath it.

MINUTES passed. No words were spoken, and the flames laughed and roared. Around the crouching men gathered an indescribable vapor, neither white smoke nor black—the combustible distillation of highly heated wood; and it rolled downward, enveloping them in its mist, a harbinger of the back-draft that is the fireman's most subtle enemy. The four recognized it, dreaded it as do all firemen, and thought of safety. They stood up and backed slowly down several steps, clinging to the straining nozzle. But the back-draft gives little warning.

Two seconds elapsed and the gas took fire. Like the breath of a reverberatory furnace suddenly shunted on to them it came—flames, sparks, sheets and waves of them. The flame muffled them in its incandescence, leaped at them like a demon unchained, engulfed them in a maelstrom of flame—at its very vortex a Niagara of fire that poured through the elevator shaft, inundating the stairway and threatening to incinerate whatever it found.

The hose tore itself from their grasp and slewed about like a trip hammer unfettered, menacing life with its powerful sweep. And the men, blinded, rushed they knew not where.

When the probationer's senses returned he was sprawled on his stomach in a puddle of warm water. His arms were outstretched, his helmet was gone, and his throat terribly parched. For a minute after he came to, he lay still until the roar of the conflagration struck his awakening senses, and he staggered to his feet as if intoxicated.

His face and hands were raw, the skin seared off and the under surface stinging fiercely; about him was thick, hot smoke that tortured the membranes of his throat as he drew it into his lungs, and from somewhere came a subdued crackle that told that fire was near by. His rubber coat clung to him in shreds. Through the

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oppressive gloom he groped until he found a door and opened it. A blast of heat warned him to retire.

How he had reached the room seemed a mystery, for it had all happened in those half-conscious moments when he was in the typhoon of fire; but now as he pondered, it all came back to him like parts of a dream —the dash through death before he found this haven, and then his collapse. Where were the others? Had they been as lucky as he when the avalanche of flame slid down upon them?

But retrospection was valueless now; destruction was without the door craving admission and would not be denied long. He must vacate before it entered. The probationer felt along a hot wall, stumbled over a box, and finally located a window, but no fire-escape as he had hoped. From the window on the floor below spouted smoke and flame; and a Babel of sounds, the shrieks of engines and the roll of voices, drifted upward to him from the street.

And as he stood there baffled, balked at every move, the realization of his plight was swift and disheartening. He was marooned, with no way of communicating with the outside world.

The water on the floor told him that the fire was being attacked above—by a water-tower, no doubt. He would have thrown his helmet down, but that was lost; and when he attempted to remove a boot he found the task impossible—both were stuck to his feet. But he must escape quickly or the smoke would garrote him; men can stand only so much, and firemen, though smoke-eaters, are mortal.

He remembered a box that had tripped him and he felt about for it, but his search was arrested by a blue flare several feet away in the smoky gloom, a blue light that flashed and quivered as if angered. A faint hissing noise came to his ears as the blue-green lightning sputtered; and Williams knew that a heavily charged electric cable, unmuzzled, its insulation destroyed by the heat, had allied its multivolted fangs to the flames and made existence even more hazardous.

As he stood there fascinated by the trembling blue rays, for the instant but dimly conscious of all else transpiring around him, the door burst open, bathing him in a rich, red luster. A figure, shadowy, massive, bolted into the room as if shot from a gun, and the door was slammed viciously behind it. The probationer's body became taut; he forgot the blue fire, and his raw skin ceased to tingle. Was this his rescuer?

"Williams!" bellowed a voice through the stifling murk. It was like a lion's roar; the prisoner recognized his Chief's.

Had Duffy come for him? Why Duffy and no one else? The thoughts darted through the probationer's brain.

"Here," he answered sullenly. His sore jaw hurt as he spoke, and the wave of resentment rolled back through his soul. He welcomed no help—at least not from the man who had battered him as he would a beast—he would die before he'd accept it. Duffy should not fatten his rescue record through *him!* "What do you want?"

"Git out of here; the floor's going soon," ordered the Chief in a husky voice. He leaned heavily against the wall; he had inhaled enough smoke to kill the ordinary mortal, and in his condition he imagined that the probationer was similarly groggy, unable to realize his predicament.

"Did you come after me?" asked Williams coldly.

The storm broke. Smoky Jim Duffy returned to normal; his senses emerged from the smoke.

"Yes, you puppy!" he thundered. "Don't question me. Git out, if you value your worthless carcass. You have one chance—only one; take it and shut your mouth!"

"Your help ain't needed here," retorted Williams, and his words were tinctured with the rankling in his breast. His whole being was maddened, and he determined that here it should be as man to man, not as Chief to probationer.

"Come to reason, you idiot!" snarled Duffy. "Another minute and it'll be too late."

"You can go if you wish," said Williams. "I'll stay. Why did you come?"

"I followed you. Wanted to keep a gage on the yellow streak that runs up your back, waiting for it to boil over. The others got downstairs."

The taunt scourged the younger man's soul, and his blood became hotter than the fire that menaced him. The flames and smoke dropped into oblivion; the tumult became naught, and he knew only the pounding he had received at Duffy's hands.

"Are you coming?" yelled the Chief.

"No, not with you," answered Williams.

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"Then, by ——, I'll carry you!" Chief Duffy thought that he had a madman to deal with. Mutiny constituted insanity in his code, and he wondered whether the smoke had penetrated the probationer's brain, robbing him of reason. He had seen many such instances in his career. There was but one exit, and that through the mountain of fire he had tunneled in his search for the missing man after the back draft; and this would soon be gone. Was Williams afraid to take the one chance for existence?

Like a pair of ghouls in a death-grapple they closed, silent, invisible foemen, each clutching into the gloom for the other's body, warily circling through the shadowy blackness, feeling in a dozen different directions at once. They met swiftly and in a moment were clinched in an embrace that would have crushed the breath out of men less rugged than they; and the shock of the collision threw Duffy's helmet to the floor.

Hands grappled for throats; brute force supplanted skill in this contest where neither man saw the other; and they swayed in the darkness, shoulder to shoulder, like two tigers standing upright, obeying the instinct for the jugular. The probationer fought like a demon incarnate, brought all of his unfathomed strength into play, and taxed Duffy to the utmost; the old man-tamer had never tackled a man who tried him as did this one. Both men breathed hard; battling men require good air, and there was none here—mostly smoke.

Twice they careened perilously near the blue light that danced and beckoned them closer to its glowing fangs, and the half-devoured flooring trembled under their booted feet that dug against the boards as their bodies hammered together. They floundered about until they tripped over Duffy's helmet and fell like logs, still clawing and tearing at each other.

Duffy landed on his back. For the instant his iron hold was broken as his head rammed the floor, and lightning-quick the probationer's paws were at his throat, closing on it like a pair of pliers. Had Williams's fingers been rivets they could have fastened no tighter, and though Duffy tussled, drew on all his mighty sinews, he could not break the vise that shut off what little air there was. And the Chief, too, forgot the flames, thought only of the madman at his windpipe. Was the man intent upon his murder? Was this the reward from a man whom he was attempting to save?

The two giants were still struggling about in the warm water when the charred door was suddenly blown from its hinges, affording them a glimpse of hell's replica without —a welter of fire that surged toward them, searing Duffy's bulging eyes with its pitiless heat. Duffy's strength was ebbing fast. He realized that he must do something and that quickly. Mustering all his energies in a supreme effort, he wrenched the hands from his throat and took a gulp of the smoke; but Williams like an incubus forced his prey to the quivering floor and sought his grip again.

"You'd murder me, you hell hound," grated the Chief as he tore at the fingers feeling for his throat.

But the probationer said nothing. Coiling one of his cable-like arms around Duffy's body, with the other hand still rooted at his captive's neck, he slowly began to drag his man along the floor. Duffy now saw in the red glare the face of the man striving to throttle him—features, blistered and blackened, that told of grim grit even though Death hovered in the mist.

He fought, but Williams's arm was like a band of steel and hauled him resistlessly across the trembling floor. His eyes rolled backward and a blue flash he had not seen before leaped toward him, imparting its message of destruction in the briefest time. He sensed the bright warning and his soul recoiled. Was this the goal the probationer sought?

SUDDENLY Williams lowered his head. "The fire'll get us—the floor's 'bout gone outside, and we'll drop in a minute," he said in a calm voice.

The deluge of fire rolled slowly through the doorway, scorching the unburned tatters the men still wore, and blowing sparks in their faces.

"Take the chance!" yelled the Chief.

"Chance nothing!" derided the probationer in his ear. His body was flattened on his superior's. "There ain't any chance; we've a choice only—there's fire and there's the blue flame. We can have either. We're dead men, anyway—which do you want? We can cheat the fire, beat it at its own game, and—" he hesitated— "we're justified. I'll take what you choose. Quick!"

Duffy's mind jumped to the story Williams had related in the fire-house after h s

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thrashing, and its import came back afresh. Was this man willing to stretch out his hand and touch the stream of death to defraud the flames of their sacrifice? Had he as Chief infused into this youngster's soul a hatred of fire so deadly, so dominating, that even when death called through the flames he sought to circumvent them, to die in some other way? If so, he had wrought a fireman of his own kind.

"Take the chance," pleaded Duffy, closing his eyes against the heat that fanned his face.

"There ain't any," replied Williams. "Choose, —— you, choose! I'm ready when you are. Say the word. Which?"

The probationer was now within striking distance of the blue light.

"Neither," said Duffy grimly.

"Choose while you can," said Williams fiercely between his teeth. "Got to be one —shall I do it for you?"

But Duffy was mute. Above the tumult he heard a rumble, and he knew that the floors were beginning to totter and crumple. The probationer heard the same sound.

"Choose!"

The word was flung from Williams's lips as he shoved his blackened face, lighted by the glare, before the eyes of the man he pinned down.

"Choose!" His voice rang high again. "The floors are going."

Beneath them the boards shook, prepared for their fatal plunge into the torment below.

"You'll take the blue light!" shrieked the probationer exultantly, and he reached for the naked wire.

But "Smoky Jim" Duffy took a chance that same moment, giving whatever odds Fate demanded; and his superb stamina stood him well in the crisis when it was most needed. Gathering every muscle in his brawny frame, he lunged desperately upward, bearing with him the man who wedged him to the floor. He saw the probationer's hand dart toward the blue dazzle as he launched his terrific upheaval, and with a swift stroke he struck it aside from its purpose. The floor shivered under the force of his spring.

Smoky Jim reached his feet, grasping the struggling Williams as if the probationer were a child. Duffy's strength had become superhuman. For hardly a heartbeat he stood still, his eyes standing out as if his mind were adrift; and the next moment he plunged into the seething tornado, hugging his burden tightly. Behind him as he crossed the threshold the floor groaned once and then dropped into blazing space.

The flames rolled over them like sea surf, enwrapped them, breathed in their faces, and made ashes of their clothing. But through this artery of perdition Smoky Jim Duffy raced, burying his face against the body he bore at his breast. And he came through those fiery vitals, though the flames leered at him and drew their long, searing, yellow-red tongues across him and his cargo; and he surrendered his lading only when he tumbled down a stairway and rolled to where Engine Company 78, in despair over the loss of the probationer and their Chief who had gone to his rescue, was wrathfully hosing the pyre.

THE warm sunshine of May had returned to New York before Duffy and Williams emerged from bandages, liniments, and such things; and on the day the old Chief sauntered back to the fire-house he found the probationer there, polishing harness. They shook hands bruskly, unsmiling, each studying the other's scarred face.

"You'll do for the job, I guess," remarked the Chief, his gray eyes twinkling; "but you've got one thing to learn."

Williams looked interrogative.

"Take a chance when you see one; the world's full of them, and this business is all chance. You're a fireman now—I sent the recommendation to the Commissioner yesterday."

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# The LAUGHING CAVALIER

by Baroness Orczy

SYNOPSIS—Holland in 1624 was under the heel of its Stadtholder, *Maurice, Prince of Orange*, whom *Willem, Lord of Stoutenburg*, is planning to assassinate and succeed. The plot becomes known to *Gilda Beresteyn*, whom Stoutenburg wishes to marry despite the fact that he had jilted her years before. Fearing that the girl will tell, Stoutenburg and Gilda's brother *Nicolaes* hire a merry, chivalrous soldier of fortune known as *Diogenes* (*"the Laughing Cavalier"*) to carry her off from her home in Haarlem to the house of the Beresteyns' banker, *Ben Isaje*, in Rotterdam. The next day Diogenes is forced by circumstances to promise Gilda's father, *Cornelius*, that he will rescue the girl, the elder Beresteyn not knowing that Diogenes is his daughter's abductor.

In the meantime Stoutenburg arranges to waylay Maurice as he crosses the River Schie near Ryswick; and to that end establishes his headquarters in a mill near by. Thither, owing to new developments, he has Gilda transferred. Stoutenburg also seizes Diogenes, who has incurred his hate, robs him of Nicolaes' note ordering Ben Isaje to pay the kidnapper, and holds him prisoner. Diogenes has no hope of rescue save at the hands of his two partners and comrades in arms, *Socrates* and *Pythagoras*. Just now Stoutenburg has ordered Diogenes to be fetched before Gilda in the expectation that Diogenes, through ignorance or fear, will exonerate him from complicity in the kidnapping plot.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### THE WITNESS FOR THE DEFENSE

THE Lord of Stoutenburg was the first to enter. Behind him came his faithful lieutenant, Jan, and finally a group of soldiers, above whose heads towered another broad white brow surmounted by a wealth of unruly brown hair which now clung matted against the moist forehead.

At a word of command from Stoutenburg, Jan and the other soldiers departed, leaving only him and the prisoner before Gilda Beresteyn.

The man had told her, on that first night at Leyden, that his name was Diogenes—a name highly honored in the history of philosophy. Well, philosophy apparently was standing him in good stead, for truly it must be responsible for the happy way in which he seemed to be bearing his present unhappy condition.

They had tied his arms behind his back and put a pinion through them; his clothes were torn, his massive chest was bare, his shirt bore ugly, dark stains upon it; but his face was just the same—that merry, laughing face, with the twinkling eyes, and the gentle irony that lurked around the lines of the sensitive mouth. At any rate, when Gilda, overcome with pity, looked up with sweet compassion on him, she saw that same curious, immutable smile that seemed even now to mock and to challenge.

"This is the man, mejuffrouw," began Stoutenburg after a while, "who on New Year's Day at Haarlem dared to lay hands upon your person. Do you recognize him?"

"I do recognize him," replied Gilda coldly.

"I imagine," continued Stoutenburg, "that he hath tried to palliate his own



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villainies by telling you that he was merely a paid agent in that abominable outrage."

"I do not think," she retorted, still quite coldly, "that this—this person told me that he was being paid for that ugly deed; though when I did accuse him of it he did not deny it."

"Do you hear, fellow?" asked Stoutenburg, turning sharply to Diogenes. "It is time that all this lying should cease. By your calumnies and evil insinuations you have added to the load of crimes which already have earned for you exemplary punishment; by those same lies you have caused the jongejuffrouw an infinity of pain, over and above the horror which she has endured through your cowardly attack upon her.

"Therefore I have thought it best to send for you now, so that in her exalted presence at least you may desist from further lying, and that you may be shamed into acknowledging the truth.

"Do you hear, fellow?" he reiterated more harshly, as Diogenes stood there, seemingly not even hearing what the Lord of Stoutenburg said; for his eyes, in which a quaint light of humor danced, were fixed upon Gilda's hands that lay clasped upon her lap.

The look in the man's face, the soft pallor on the girl's cheek, exasperated Stoutenburg's jealous temper beyond his power of control.

"Do you hear?" he shouted once more; and with a sudden grip of the hand he pulled the prisoner roughly around by the shoulder. That shoulder had been torn open by a blow dealt by a massive steel blade which had lacerated it to the bone; even a philosopher's endurance was not proof against this sudden rending of an already painful wound. Diogenes's pale face became the color of lead. The tiny room began to dance an irresponsive saraband before his eyes; he felt himself swaying, for the ground was giving way under him, when a cry, gentle and compassionate, reached his fading senses, and a perfume of exquisite sweetness came to his nostrils, even as his pinioned arms felt just enough support to enable him to steady himself.

"Gilda," broke in Stoutenburg's harsh voice upon this intangible dream, "I entreat you not to demean yourself by ministering to that rogue."

"My poor ministry was for a wounded man, my lord," she retorted curtly.

Stoutenburg, smothering a curse, threw away from him the weapon he had drawn; it fell with a terrible crash upon the wooden floor. Gilda, white and trembling now after the agonizing excitement of the past awful moment, had sunk half swooning back against a chair. Stoutenburg fell on one knee and humbly raised her gown to his lips.

"Your pardon, madonna," he whispered. "The sight of your exquisite hands in contact with that infamous blackguard made me mad. I was almost ready to cheat the gallows of its prey. I gratefully thank you, in that you saved me from the indignity of staining my hand with a vile creature's blood."

QUIETLY and dispassionately Gilda drew her skirts away from him.

"If you have recovered your temper, my lord," she said coldly, "I pray you ask the prisoner those questions which you desired to put to him. I am satisfied that he is your enemy, and if he were not bound, pinioned and wounded he would probably not have need of a woman's hand to protect him."

Stoutenburg rose to his feet. He was angered with himself for allowing his hatred and his rage to get the better of his prudence, and tried to atone for his exhibition of incontinent rage by a great show of dignity and of reserve.

"I must ask you again, fellow, and for the last time," he said, slowly turning once more to Diogenes, "if you have realized how infamous have been your insinuations against mine honor, and that of others whom the jongejuffrouw holds in high regard? Your calumnies have caused her infinite sorrow, more bitter for her to bear than the dastardly crime which you did commit against her person. Have you realized this, and are you prepared to make amends for your crime and to mitigate somewhat the grave punishment which you have deserved by speaking the plain truth before the jongejuffrouw now?"

"And what plain truth doth the jongejuffrouw desire to hear?" asked Diogenes with equal calm.

Stoutenburg would have replied, but Gilda broke in quietly—

"Your crime against me, sir, I would readily forgive, had I but the assurance that no one in whom I trusted, no one whom I loved, had a hand in instigating it."

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The ghost of his merry smile—never very distant—spread over the philosopher's pale face.

"Will you deign to allow me, mejuffrouw," he said, "at any rate to tell you one certain, unvarnished truth, which mayhap you will not even care to believe? And that is that I would give my life—the few chances, that is, that I still have of it—to obliterate from your mind the memory of the past few days."

"That you can not do, sir," she rejoined; "but you would greatly ease the load of sorrow which you have helped to lay upon me, if you gave me the assurance which I ask."

The prisoner did not reply immediately, and for one brief moment there was absolute silence in this tiny room—a silence so tense and so vivid that an eternity of joy and sorrow, of hope and of fear seemed to pass over the lives of these three human creatures here. All three had eyes and ears only for one another; the world with its grave events, its intrigues and its wars fell quite away from them; they were the only people existing—each for the other—for this one brief instant that passed by.

The fire crackled in the huge hearth, and slowly the burning wood ashes fell with a soft swishing sound one by one. But outside all was still; not a sound of the busy life around the mill, of conspiracies and calls to arms, penetrated the dense veil of fog which lay upon the low-lying land.

At last the prisoner spoke.

"'Tis easily done, mejuffrouw," he said, and all at once his whole face lit up with that light-hearted gaiety, that keen sense of humor which would, no doubt, follow him to the grave. "That assurance I can easily give you. I was the sole criminal in the hideous outrage which brought so much sorrow upon you. Had I the least hope that God would hear the prayer of so despicable a villain as I am, I would beg of Him to grant you oblivion of my deed.

"As for me," he added—and now real laughter was dancing in his eyes; they mocked and challenged and called back the joy of life— "as for me, I am impenitent. I would not forget one minute of the last four days."

"Tomorrow, then, you can take the remembrance with you to the gallows," said Stoutenburg sullenly.

Though a sense of intense relief pervaded him now, since by his assertions Diogenes had completely vindicated him as well as Nicolaes in Gilda's sight, his dark face showed no signs of brightening. That fierce jealousy of this nameless adventurer which had assailed him a while ago was gnawing at his heart more insistently than before; he could not combat it, even though reason itself argued that jealousy of so mean a knave was unworthy, and that Gilda's compassion was only the same as that which she would have extended to any dog that had been hurt.

Even now—reason still argued—was it not natural that she should plead for the villain, just as any tender-natured woman would plead even for a thief? Women hate the thought of violent death; only an Amazon would desire to mete out death to any enemy.

Gilda was warm-hearted, impulsive; the ugly word "gallows" grated no doubt unpleasantly on her ear. But even so, and despite the dictates of reason, Stoutenburg's jealousy and hatred were up in arms the moment she turned pleading eyes upon him.

"MY LORD," she said gently, "I pray you to remember that by this open confession, this—this gentleman has caused me infinite happiness. I can not tell you what misery my own suspicions have caused me these past two days. They were harder to bear than any humiliation or sorrow which I had to endure."

"This varlet's lies confirmed you in your suspicions, Gilda," retorted Stoutenburg roughly, "and his confession—practically at the foot of the gallows—is but a tardy one."

"Do not speak so cruelly, my lord," she pleaded. "You say that—that you have some regard for me; let not therefore my prayer fall unheeded on your ear——"

"Your prayer, Gilda?"

"My prayer that you deal nobly with an enemy, whose wrongs to me I am ready to forgive——"

"By St. Bavon, mejuffrouw," here interposed the prisoner firmly, "if mine ears do not deceive me, you are even now pleading for my life with the Lord of Stoutenburg."

"Indeed, sir, I do plead for it with my whole heart," she said earnestly.

"Ye gods!" he exclaimed. "And ye do not interfere!"

"My lord!" urged Gilda gently. "For my sake——"

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Her words her look, the tears that despite her will had struggled to her eyes, scattered to the winds Stoutenburg's reasoning powers. He felt now that nothing while this man lived would ever still that newly risen passion of jealousy. He longed for and desired this man's death more even than that of the Prince of Orange.

His honor had been luckily whitewashed before Gilda, by this very man whom he hated. He had a feeling that within the last half hour he had made enormous strides in her regard. Already he persuaded himself that she was looking on him more kindly, as if remorse at her unjust suspicions of him had touched her soul on his behalf.

Everything now would depend on how best he could seem noble and generous in her sight; but he was more determined than ever that his enemy should stand disgraced before her first, and die on the gallows on the morrow.

Then it was that, putting up his hand to the region of his heart, which indeed was beating furiously, he felt the roll of parchment which lay in the inner pocket of his doublet. Fate, chance, his own foresight, were indeed making the way easy for him, and quicker than lightning his tortuous brain had already formed a plan upon which he promptly acted now.

"Gilda," he said quietly, "though Heaven knows how ready I am to do you service in all things, this is a case where weakness on my part would be almost criminal; for indeed it would be to a hardened and abandoned criminal that I should be extending that mercy for which you plead."

"Indeed, my lord," she retorted coldly, "though only a woman, I too can judge if a man is an abandoned criminal, or merely a misguided human creature who doth deserve mercy since his confession was quite open, frank."

"Common sense did prompt him, no doubt, to this half confession," said Stoutenburg dryly, "or a wise instinct to win leniency by his conduct, seeing that he had no proofs wherewith to substantiate his former lies.

"Am I not right, fellow?" he added, once more turning to the prisoner. "Though you were forced to own that you alone are responsible for the outrage against the jongejuffrouw, you have not told her yet that you are also a forger and a thief."

Diogenes looked on him for a moment or two in silence, just long enough to force Stoutenburg's shifty eyes to drop with a sudden and involuntary sense of shame; then he rejoined with his usual good humored flippancy:

"It was a detail which had quite escaped my memory. No doubt your Magnificence is fully prepared to rectify the omission."

"Indeed, I wish that I could have spared you this additional disgrace," retorted Stoutenburg, whose sense of shame had indeed been only momentary, "seeing that anyhow you must hang tomorrow.

"But," he added, once more to the jongejuffrouw, "I could not bear you to think, Gilda, that I could refuse you anything which it is in my power to grant you. Before you plead for this scoundrel again, you ought to know that he has tried by every means in his power—by lying and by forgery—to fasten the origin of all this infamy upon your brother."

"Upon Nicolaes!" she cried. "I'll not believe it! A moment ago he did vindicate him freely."

"Only because I had at last taken away from him the proofs which he had forged."

"The proofs? What do you mean, my lord?"

"When my men captured this fellow last night, they found upon him a paper, a bond which is an impudent forgery, which purported to have been written by Nicolaes and which promised payment to this knave for laying hands upon you in Haarlem."

"A bond?" she murmured. "Signed by Nicolaes?"

"I say it again, 'tis an impudent forgery," declared Stoutenburg hotly. "We—all of us who have seen it and who know Nicolaes' signature—could see at a glance that this one was counterfeit. Yet the fellow used it; he obtained money on the strength of it, for beside the jewelry which he had filched from you, we found several hundred guilders upon his person.

"Liar, forger, thief!" he cried. "In Holland such men are broken on the wheel! Hanging is thought merciful for such scum as they!"

AND from out the pocket of his doublet he drew the paper which had been writ by the public scrivener, and was signed with Nicolaes' cipher signature; he handed it to Gilda, even whilst the

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prisoner, throwing back his head, sent one of his heartiest laughs echoing through the raftered room.

"Well played, my lord!" he said gaily. "Nay, but by the devils whom you serve so well, you do indeed deserve to win!"

In the meanwhile, Gilda, wide-eyed and horrified, not knowing what to think, nor yet what to believe, scarcely dared to touch the infamous document whose very presence in her lap seemed a pollution. She noticed that some portion of the paper had been torn off, but the wording of the main portion of the writing was quite clear, as was the signature "Schwarze Kato" with the triangle above it.

On this she looked now with a curious mixture of loathing and of fear. Schwarze Kato was the name of the tulip which her father had raised and named; the triangle was a mark which the house of Beresteyn often used in business.

"Oh God, have mercy upon me!" she murmured inwardly. "What does all this treachery mean?"

She looked up from one man to the other. The Lord of Stoutenburg, dark and sullen, was watching her with restless eyes; the prisoner was smiling, gentle, almost self-deprecating, she thought; and as he met her frightened glance it seemed as if in his merry eyes there crept a look of sadness—even of pity.

"What does all this treachery mean?" she murmured again with pathetic helplessness, and this time just above her breath.

"It means," said Stoutenburg roughly, "that at last you must be convinced that this man on whom you have wasted your kindly pity is utterly unworthy of it. That bond was never written by your brother; it was never signed by him. But we found it on this villain's person; he has been trading on it, obtaining money on the strength of this forgery.

"He has confessed to you that he had no accomplice, no paymaster in his infamies; then ask him whence came this bond in his possession, whence the money which we found upon him. Ask him to deny the fact that less than twenty-four hours after he had laid hands on you, he was back again in Haarlem, bargaining with your poor, stricken father to bring you back to him."

He ceased speaking, almost choked now by his own eloquence, and the rapidity with which the lying words escaped his lips. And Gilda slowly turned her head toward the prisoner, and met that subtly ironical, good-humored glance again.

"Is this all true, sir?" she asked.

"What, mejuffrouw?" he retorted.

"That this bond promising you payment for the cruel outrage upon me is a forgery?"

"His Magnificence says so, mejuffrouw," he replied quietly. "Surely you know best if you can believe him."

"But this is not my brother's signature?" she asked; and she herself was not aware what an infinity of pleading there was in her voice.

"No!" he replied emphatically. "It is not your brother's signature."

"Then it is a forgery?"

"We will leave it at that, mejuffrouw," he said, "that it is a forgery."

A sigh, hoarse and passionate in its expression of infinite relief, escaped the Lord of Stoutenburg's lips. Though he knew that the man in any case could have no proof if he accused Nicolaes, yet there was great satisfaction in this unqualified confession. Slowly the prisoner turned his head and looked upon his triumphant enemy, and it was the man with the pinioned arms, with the tattered clothes and the stained shirt who seemed to tower in pride, in swagger and in defiance, while the other looked just what he was—a craven and miserable cur.

Once more there was silence in the low-raftered room. From Gilda's eyes the tears fell slowly one by one. She could not have told you herself why she was crying at this moment. Her brother's image stood out clearly before her, wholly vindicated of treachery, and a scoundrel had been brought to his knees, self-confessed as a liar, a forger and a thief; the Lord of Stoutenburg was proved to have been faithful and true, and yet Gilda felt such a pain in her heart that she thought it must break.

The Lord of Stoutenburg at last broke the silence, which had become oppressive.

"Are you satisfied, Gilda?" he asked tenderly.

"I feel happier," she replied softly, "than I have felt these four days past, at the thought that my own brother at least—nor you, my lord—had no hand in all this treachery."

She would not look again on the prisoner, even though she felt, more than she saw, that a distinctly humorous twinkle had

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once more crept into his eyes. It seemed, however, as if she wished to say something else, something kind and compassionate, but Stoutenburg broke in impatiently:

"May I dismiss the fellow now?" he asked. "Jan is waiting for orders outside."

"Then I pray you call to Jan," she rejoined stiffly.

"The rogue is securely pinioned," he added, even as he turned toward the door. "I pray you, have no fear of him."

"I have no fear," she said simply.

Stoutenburg strode out of the room and anon his harsh voice was heard calling to Jan.

FOR a moment then Gilda was alone—for the third time now—with the man whom she had hated more than she had ever hated a human creature before. She remembered how last night and again at Leyden she had been conscious of an overpowering desire to wound him with hard and bitter words.

But now she no longer felt that desire, since Fate had hurt him more cruelly than she had wished to do. He was standing there now before her, in all the glory of his magnificent physique, yet infinitely shamed and degraded, self-confessed of every mean and horrible crime that has ever degraded manhood.

Yet in spite of this shame he still looked splendid and untamed; though his arms were bound to a pinion behind his back, his broad chest was not sunken, and he held himself very erect with that leonine head of his thrown well back, and a smile of defiance, almost of triumph, sat upon every line of his face.

Anon she met his eyes; their glance compelled and held her own. There was nothing but kindly humor within their depths. Humor! Ye gods! Whence came the humor of the situation?

Here was a man condemned to death by an implacable enemy who was not like to show any mercy. Gilda herself—remembering all his crimes—could no longer bring herself to ask for mercy for him; and yet the man seemed only to mock, to smile at Fate, to take his present desperate position as lightly and as airily as another would take a pleasing turn of Fortune's wheel.

Conscious at last that his look of unconquerable good humor was working upon her nerves, Gilda forced herself to break the spell of numbness which had so unaccountably fallen upon her.

"I should like to say to you, sir," she murmured, "how deeply I regret the many harsh words I spoke to you at Leyden and—and also last night. Believe me, there was no feeling in me of cruelty toward you when I spoke them."

"Indeed, mejuffrouw," he rejoined placidly, whilst the gentle mockery in his glance became more accentuated, "indeed I am sure that your harshness toward me was only dictated by your kindliness.

"Believe me," he added lightly, "your words that evening at Leyden, and again last night were most excellent discipline for my temper; for this do I thank you! They have helped me to bear subsequent events with greater equanimity."

She bit her lip, feeling vexed at his flippancy. A man on the point of death should take the last hours of his life more seriously.

"It grieved me to see," she resumed somewhat more stiffly, "that one who could on occasions be so brave, should on others stoop to such infamous tricks."

"Man is ever a creature of opportunity, mejuffrouw," he said imperturbably.

"But I remembered you, you see, on New Year's Eve in the Dam Straat, when you held up a mob to protect an unfortunate girl. Oh! It was bravely done!"

"Yet believe me, mejuffrouw," he said with a whimsical smile, "that though I own appearances somewhat belie me, I have done better since."

"I wish I could believe you, sir. But since then——Oh, think of my horror when I recognized you the next day, at Leyden, after your cowardly attack upon me!"

"Indeed I have thought of it already, mejuffrouw. *Dondersteen!* I must have appeared a coward before you then!"

He gave a careless shrug of the shoulders, and very quaintly did that carelessness sit on him, now that he was pinioned, wounded and in a relentless enemy's hands.

"Perhaps I am a coward," he added with a strange little sigh. "You think so; the Lord of Stoutenburg declares that I am a miserable cur. Does man ever know himself? I for one have never been worth the study."

"Nay, sir, there you do wrong yourself," she said gently. "I can not rightly gage what temptations did beset you when you lay hands upon a defenseless woman, or



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when you forged my brother's name—for this you did do, did you not?" she asked insistently.

"Have I not confessed to it?" he retorted quietly.

"Alas! And for these crimes must I despise you," she added quaintly. "But since then my mind hath been greatly troubled. Something tells me—and would to God I saw it all more clearly—that much that you so bravely endure just now, is somehow because of me. Am I wrong?"

HE LAUGHED, a dry, gentle, self-mocking laugh.

"Then I have endured much because of you, mejuffrouw," he said gaily, "I'll not deny, my worthy patron St. Bavon being singularly slack in his protection of me on two or three memorable occasions; but this does not refer to my present state, which has come about because half a dozen men fell upon me when I was unarmed and pounded at me with heavy steel skates, which they swung by their straps. The skates were good weapons, I must own, and have caused one or two light wounds which are but scraps of evil fortune that a nameless adventurer like myself must take along with kindlier favors.

"So I pray you, mejuffrouw, have no further thought of my unpleasant bodily condition. I have been through worse plights than this before, and if tomorrow I must hang——"

"No, no!" she interrupted with a cry of horror. "That can not and must not be."

"Indeed it can and must, mejuffrouw. Ask the Lord of Stoutenburg what his intentions are."

"Oh, but I can plead with him!" she declared. "He hath told me things today which have made me very happy. My heart is full of forgiveness for you, who have wronged me so, and I would feel happy in pleading for you."

Something that she said appeared to tickle his fancy, for at her words he threw his head right back and laughed immoderately, loudly and long.

"Ye gods!" he cried, while she—a little frightened and puzzled—looked wide-eyed upon him. "Let me hear those words ringing in mine ears, when the rope is 'round my neck! The Lord of Stoutenburg hath the power to make a woman happy! The words he speaks are joy unto her heart! Oh, ye gods! Let me remember this and laugh at it until I die!"

His somewhat wild laugh had not ceased to echo in the low-raftered room, nor had Gilda time to recover her composure, before the door was thrown violently open and the Lord of Stoutenburg reëntered, followed by Jan and a group of men.

He threw a quick, suspicious glance on Gilda and on Diogenes. The latter answered him with one of good-humored irony; but Gilda, pale and silent, turned her head away.

Stoutenburg then pointed to Diogenes.

"Here is your prisoner," he said to Jan. "Take him back to the place from whence you brought him. Guard him well, Jan, for tomorrow he must hang, and remember that your life shall pay for his if he escapes."

Jan thereupon gave a brief word of command. The men ranged themselves around the prisoner, whose massive figure was thus completely hidden from Gilda's view; only, towering above the heads of the soldiers, the wide sweep of his brow caught a glimmer of light from the flickering lamp overhead.

Soon the order was given. The small knot of men turned and slowly filed out. The Lord of Stoutenburg was the last to leave. He bowed nearly to the ground when he finally left Gilda's presence.

And she remained alone, sitting by the fire, and staring into the smoldering ashes. She had heard news tonight that flooded her soul with happiness. Her brother, whom she loved, was innocent of crime, and God himself had interfered to stop the infamous plot against the Stadtholder's life. Yet Gilda's heart was unaccountably heavy, and as she sat on, staring into the fire, heavy tears fell unheeded from her eyes.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### BROTHER PHILOSOPHERS

AND now for the clang of arms, the movement, the bustle, the excitement of combat! There are swords to polish, pistols to clean, muskets to see to! Something is in the air! We have not been brought hither all the way to this fog-ridden spot in order to stare on a tumble-down mill, or watch a solitary prisoner ere he hang!

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Jan knows, of course, and Jan is eager and alert, febrile in his movements; there is a glow in his hollow eyes. And Jan always looks like that when fighting is in the air, when he sniffs the scent of blood and hears the resonance of metal against metal.

Jan knows, of course. He has no thought of sleep; all night he wanders up and down the improvised camp. No fires allowed, and it is pitch dark, but an occasional glimmer from a lanthorn lights up compact groups of men prone upon the frozen ground, wrapped in thick coats, or huddled up with knees to chin trying to keep warm.

A few lanthorns are allowed, far in the interior of that weird forest of beams under the mill, where slender protection against a bitter northwesterly wind can alone be found.

Shoulder to shoulder, getting warmth one from the other, we are all too excited to sleep. Something is in the air, some fighting to be done, and yet there are only thirty or forty of us at most; but swords and muskets have been given out, and half the night through my lord and his friends, served only by Jan, have been carrying heavy loads from the mill out toward the Schie and the wooden bridge that spans it.

Silently, and always coming away with those heavy loads from the mill; and walking with them away into the gloom, always returning empty-handed, and served only by Jan. Bah, we are no cullions! 'Tis not mighty difficult to guess. And by the saints! Why all this mystery? Some of us are paid to fight; what care we how we do it—in the open with muskets or cross-bows, or in the dark, with a sudden blow which no man knows whence it comes?

All night we sit and wait, and all night we are under the eye of Jan. He serves his lord and helps him to carry those heavy boxes from the mill to some unknown place by the Schie; but he is always there when you least expect him, watching to see that all is well, that there is not too much noise, that no one has been tempted to light a fire, that we do not quarrel too hotly among ourselves.

He keeps a watchful eye, too, upon the prisoner—poor beggar!—with a broken shoulder and a torn hip, and some other wounds, too, about his body. A good fighter, no doubt, but there were seven against him, and that was a good idea to swing heavy skates by their straps and to bring him down with them. His head was too high, else a blow from those sharp blades might have ended his life more kindly than the Lord of Stoutenburg hath planned to do.

A merry devil, too—full of quaint jokes and tales of gay adventure! By ——, a real soldier of fortune—devil-may-care—eat and drink and make merry, for tomorrow we may die! Jan has ordered him to be kept tied to a beam. *Godverdomme!* But it's hard on a wounded man; but he seems tougher than the beams, and laughter in his throat quickly smothers groans.

Tied to a beam, he is excellent company. Ye gods, how his hands itch to grip his sword! Piet the Red over there! Let him feel the metal against his palms; 'twill ease his temper for sure!

Jan is too severe; but 'tis my lord's rage that was unbridled. Ugh! To strike a prisoner in the face! 'Twas a dirty trick, and many saw it.

Heigh-ho! But what matter? To-morrow we fight, to-morrow he hangs. What of that? To-morrow most of us, mayhap, will be lying stark and stiff upon the frozen ground, staring up at next night's moon with eyes that no longer see. A rope around the neck, a hole in the side, a cracked skull—what matters which mode Dame Death will choose for our ultimate end?

But 'tis a pity about the prisoner! A true fighter, if there was one; a stoic and a philosopher. "The Cavalier" we pretty soon call him.

"What ho!" he shouts. "Call me the Laughing Cavalier!"

Poor devil! He tries not to show his hurts. He suffers much, what with that damnable wind and those ropes that cut into his tough sinews; but he smiles at every twinge of pain—smiles and laughs and cracks the broadest jokes that have e'er made these worm-eaten beams ring with their echo.

THE Laughing Cavalier, in sooth! There! Now we can ease him somewhat. Jan's back is turned; we dare not touch the ropes, but a cloak put between his back and the beam, and another just against his head.

Is that not better, old compeer?

Aye! But is it not good to be a villain and a rogue, and herd with other villains

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and other rogues who are so infinitely more kind and gentle than all those noble lords?

Diogenes—his head propped against the rude cushion placed there by the hand of some rough Samaritan—has fallen into a fitful doze.

Whispers around him wake him with a start. Ye gods! Was there ever so black a night? The whispers become more eager, more insistent.

"Let us but speak with him. We'll do no harm!"

St. Bavon, tell us how those two scarecrows have got here! For they are here in the flesh, both of them; Diogenes would have spotted his brother philosophers through darkness darker than the blackest Hades—Pythagoras, rolling in fat, and Socrates, lean and hungry-looking, peering like a huge gaunt bird through the gloom. Some one is holding up a lanthorn, and Pythagoras, tip-tilted nose shines with a ruddy glow.

"But how did you get here, you old mushroom-face?" asks one of the men.

"We had business with him at Rotterdam," quoth Socrates, with one of his choicest oaths and nodding in the direction of the prisoner. "All day we have wondered what had become of him."

"Then in the afternoon," breaks in Pythagoras, to the accompaniment of a rival set of expletives, "we saw him trussed like a fowl and tied into a sledge drawn by a single horse, which started in the wake of a larger one wherein sat a lovely jongejuffrouw."

"Then what did you do?" queries someone.

"Do?" exclaim the philosophers simultaneously and in a tone of deep disgust.

"Followed on his trail as best we could," rejoins Socrates simply; "borrowed some skates, ran down the Schie in the wake of the two sledges and their escort."

"And after that?"

"After that we traced them to this solitary hole. But presently we saw that this mill was not so deserted as it seemed, so we hung about until now. Then we ventured nearer—and here we are."

Here they were, of course; but how was it possible to contravene the orders of Jan? What could these scarecrows have to say to the Laughing Cavalier?

"Just to ask him if there's anything we can do," murmurs Socrates persuasively, "He's like to hang tomorrow, you said. Well, grant something, then, to a dying man."

Grave heads shake in the gloom.

"Our orders are strict——"

"'Tis a matter of life and death ——"

"Bah!" quoth Pythagoras more insinuatingly still. "We are two to your thirty! What have ye all to fear?"

"Here! Tie my hands behind my back," suggests Socrates. "I want only to speak with him. How could we help him to escape?"

"We would not think of such a thing," murmurs Pythagoras piously.

Anxious glances meet one another in consultation. More than one kindly heart beats beneath these ragged doublets. Bah! The man is to hang tomorrow; why not give pleasure to a dying man? If indeed it be pleasure to look on such hideous scarecrows a few hours before death.

Jan is not here. He is with my lord, helping with those heavy boxes.

"Five minutes, you old mushroom-face," suggests he who has been left in charge.

And all the others nod approval.

But they will take no risk about the prisoner. Pleasure and five minutes' conversation with his friends, yes; but no attempt at escape. So the men make a wide circle, sitting out of earshot, but shoulder to shoulder—the thirty of them who happen to be awake. In the center of the circle is the Laughing Cavalier, tied to a beam, trussed like a fowl, since he is to hang on the morrow.

Close beside his feet is the lanthorn so that he may have a last look at his friends, and some few paces away his naked sword which Jan took from him when the men brought him down.

He has listened to the whispered conversation; he knows that his brother philosophers are here. May the God of rogues and villains bless them for their loyalty!

"AND now St. Bavon show me the best way to make use of them!"

There is still something to be done, which hath been left undone; a word hath been given and that pledge must be fulfilled, and the promised fortune still awaits him who will bring the jongejuffrouw safely to her father!

"My Heaven, if it were not for that broken shoulder and that torn hip! There are many hours yet before the morrow!"

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"Old compeer," came in a hoarse whisper close to his ear, "how did you come to such a pass?"

"They came and took the jongejuffrouw away from Rotterdam," he replied, also speaking in a whisper. "I had just returned from Delft, where I had business to transact, and I recognized Jan beside the sledge into which the jongejuffrouw was stepping even then. He had ten or a dozen men with him. I felt that they meant mischief, but I had to follow—I had to find out whither they were taking her."

"*Verdommt!*" growled Socrates under his breath. "Why did you not take us along?"

"I meant to come back for you as soon as I knew; but in the dark—and from behind—seven of these fellows fell upon me. They used their skates like javelins—mine were still on my feet—I had only Bucephalus. A blow from one of the heaviest blades cracked my shoulder, another caught me on the hip.

"There were seven of them," he reiterated with a careless laugh. "It was only a question of time; they were bound to bring me down in the end."

"But who has done this?" queried Pythagoras with an oath.

"A lucky rogue on whom God hath chosen to smile. But," he added more seriously, and sinking his voice to the lowest possible whisper, "never mind about the past. Let us think of the future, old compeers."

"We are ready," they replied simultaneously.

"A knife?" he murmured. "Can you cut these confounded ropes?"

"They took everything from us," growled Socrates, "ere they let us approach you."

"Try with your hands to loosen the knots."

"What ho, you brigands! What are you doing there?"

In a moment the circle around broke up. A crowd of angry faces were gathered closely around the philosophers, and more than one pair of rough hands were laid upon their shoulders.

"Play fair, you two!" cried Piet the Red, who was in command. "Or we'll tie you both to the nearest beams and await my lord's commands."

"Easy, easy, friend!" quoth Diogenes with a pleasant laugh. "My nose was itching and my compeer held on to my arm while he tried to reach my nose in order to scratch it."

"Then if it itch again," retorted the man with an equally jovial laugh, "call for my services, friend. And now, you two scarecrows, the five minutes are over. Jan will be here in a moment."

But they formed up the circle once more, kind and compassionate. Jan was not yet here, and the rogues had had a warning; they were not like to be at their tricks again.

"Never mind about me," whispered Diogenes hurriedly as Pythagoras and Socrates, baffled and furious, were giving forth samples of their choicest vocabularies. "You see that Chance alone can favor me if she choose; if not—'tis no matter. What you can do for me is far more important than cheating the gallows of my carcass."

"What is it?" they asked simply.

"The jongejuffrouw," he said. "You know where she is?"

"In the hut—close by," replied Socrates. "We saw the sledge draw up there."

"But the house is well guarded," murmured Pythagoras.

"Nor would I ask you to run your heads in the same noose wherein mine will swing tomorrow. But keep the hut well in sight. At any hour—any moment now—there may be a call of *sauve qui peut*—every man for himself, and the greatest luck to the swiftest runner."

"But why?"

"Never mind why. It is sure to happen. Any minute you may hear the cry—confusion, terror, a scramble and a rush for the open."

"And our opportunity," came in a hoarse whisper from Socrates. "I think that I begin to understand."

"We lie low for the present, and when *sauve qui peut* is called we come straight back here and free you—in the confusion they will have forgotten you."

"IF THE confusion occurs in time," quoth Diogenes with his habitual carelessness, "you may still find me here, trussed like a fowl to this *verdommte* beam. But I have an idea that the Lord of Stoutenburg will presently be consumed with impatience to see me hang.

"He has just finished some important

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work by the bridge on the Schie—he won't be able to sleep, and the devil will be suggesting some mischief for his idle hands to do. There will be many hours to kill before daylight; one of them might be well employed in hanging me."

"Then we'll not leave you an instant," asserted Pythagoras firmly.

"What can you do, you two old scarecrows, against the Lord of Stoutenburg, who has thirty men here paid to do his bidding?"

"We are not going to lie low and play the part of cowards while you are being slaughtered."

"You will do just what I ask, faithful old compeers," rejoined Diogenes, more earnestly than was his wont. "You will lie very low and take the greatest possible care not to run your heads into the same noose wherein mayhap mine will dangle presently. Nor will you be playing the part of cowards, for you have not yet learned the A-B-C of that part; and you will remember that on your safety and freedom of action lies my one chance, not so much of life as of saving my last shred of honor."

"What do you mean?"

"The jongejuffrouw!" he whispered. "I swore to bring her back to her father, and I must cheat a rascal of his victory. In the confusion — at dawn tomorrow — think above all of the jongejuffrouw. In the confusion you can overpower the guard, rush the miller's hut where she is, carry her off. The horses are in the shed behind the hut—you may not have time to think of me."

"But——"

"Silence! They listen——"

"One of us with the jongejuffrouw; the other to help you——"

"Silence! I may be a dead man by then. . . . The jongejuffrouw, remember. Make for Ryswick with her first of all; thence straight to Haarlem, to her father—you can do it easily. A fortune awaits you if you bring her safely to him.

"Fulfil my pledge, old compeers, if I am not alive to do it myself. I don't ask you to swear—I know you'll do it; and if I must to the gallows first, I'll do so with a cry of triumph."

"But you——"

"Silence!" he murmured again peremptorily, but more hoarsely this time; for fatigue and loss of blood and tense excitement were telling upon his iron physique at last—he was well nigh spent and scarce able to speak. "Silence—I can hear Jan's footsteps.

"Here! Quick! Inside my boot—a wallet. Have you got it?" he added with a brief return to his habitual gaiety as he felt Socrates' long fingers groping against his shins, and presently beheld his wallet in his compeer's hand. "You will find money in there—enough for the journey.

"Now quick! Into the night, you two—disappear for the nonce, and anon when '*sauve qui peut*' rings in the air, tonight or at dawn or whenever this may be, remember the jongejuffrouw first of all; and when you are ready, give the cry we all know so well—the cry of the fox when it lures its prey. If I am not dangling on a gibbet by then I shall understand. But quick, now! Jan comes! Disappear, I say!"

Quietly and swiftly Socrates slipped the wallet with some of the money back into his friend's boot; the rest he hid inside his own doublet.

Strange that between these men there was no need of oaths. Pythagoras and Socrates had said nothing; silent and furtive, they disappeared into the darkness. Diogenes' head sank down upon his breast with a last sigh of satisfaction. He knew that his compeers would do what he had asked. Jan's footsteps rang on the hard-frozen ground—silently the living circle had parted—and the philosophers were swallowed up by the gloom.

Jan looks suspiciously at the groups of men who now stand desultorily around.

"Who was standing beside the prisoner just now?" he asks curtly.

"When, Captain?" queries one of the men blandly.

"A moment ago. I was descending the steps. The lanthorn was close to the prisoner; I saw two forms that looked unfamiliar to me, close to him."

"Oh!" rejoins Piet the Red unblushingly. "It must have been my back that you saw, Captain. Willem and I were looking to see that the ropes had not given way. The prisoner is so restless——"

Jan, not altogether reassured, goes up to the prisoner. He raises the lanthorn and has a good and comprehensive look at all the ropes. Then he examines the man's face.

"What ho!" he cries. "A bottle of spiced wine! The prisoner has fainted."

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## CHAPTER XXXVI

### DAWN

WHAT a commotion when dawn breaks at last! It comes gray, dull, leaden, scarce lighter than the night, the haze more dense, the frost more biting. But it does break at last, after that interminable night of excitement and sleeplessness and preparations for the morrow.

Jan has never closed an eye; he has scarcely rested even, pacing up and down, in and out of those Gargantuan beams, with the mill and its secrets towering above his head. Nor, I imagine, did those noble lords and mynheers up there sleep much during this night; but they were tired and lay like logs upon straw pallets, living over again the past few hours—the carrying of heavy iron boxes one by one from the mill to the wooden bridge, the unloading there, the unpacking in the darkness, and the disposal of the death-dealing powder, black and evil-smelling, which will put an end with its one mighty crash to tyranny and the Stadtholder's life.

Tired they are, but too excited to sleep; the last few hours are like a vivid dream—the preparation of the tinder, the arrangements, the position to be taken up by Beresteyn and Heemskerk, the two chosen lieutenants who will send the wooden bridge over the Schie flying in splinters into the air.

Van Does, too, has his work cut out. General in command of the forces—foreign mercenaries and louts from the country—he has Jan for able Captain. The mercenaries and the louts know nothing yet of what will happen to-morrow, when once the dawn has broken; but they are well prepared—like beasts of the desert they can scent blood in the air.

Look at them polishing up their swords and cleaning their muskets! They know that tomorrow they will fight, even though tonight they have had no orders save to see that one prisoner tied with ropes to a beam and fainting with exposure and loss of blood does not contrive to escape.

But the Lord of Stoutenburg is more wakeful than all. Like a caged beast of prey he paces up and down the low, narrow weighing-room of the mill, his hands tightly clenched behind his back, his head bare, his cloak cast aside despite the bitter coldness of the night.

Restless and like a beast of prey, his nostrils quiver with the lust of hate and revenge that seethes within his soul. Two men he hates with a consuming passion of hatred—the Stadtholder, Prince of Orange, sovereign ruler of half the Netherlands, and a penniless adventurer whose very name is unknown.

Both these men now are in the power of the Lord of Stoutenburg. The bridge is prepared, the powder laid. Tomorrow justice will be meted out to the tyrant. God alone could save him now, and God of a surety must be on the side of a just revenge! The other man is helpless and a prisoner; despite his swagger and his insolence, justice shall be meted out to him, too. God alone could save him, and God, of a surety, could not be on the side of an impudent rogue!

These thoughts, which were as satisfying to the Lord of Stoutenburg as food placed at an unattainable distance is to a starving beast, kept him awake and pacing up and down the room after he had finished his work under the bridge.

He could not sleep for thinking of the prisoner, of the man's insolence, of the humiliation and contempt which with every glance he had brought shame to my lord's cheeks. The Lord of Stoutenburg could not sleep, also, for thinking of Gilda, and the tender, pitying eyes wherewith she regarded the prisoner, the gentle tone of her voice when she spoke to him, even after proof had been placed before her that the man was a forger and a thief.

The Lord of Stoutenburg could not sleep; and all the demons of jealousy, of hatred and of revenge were chasing him up and down the room and whispering suggestions of mischief to be wrought, of a crime to be easily committed.

"While that man lives," whispered the demon of hate in his ear, "thou wilt not know a moment's rest. Tomorrow when thy hand should be steady when it wields the dagger against the Stadtholder, it will tremble and falter, for thoughts of that man will unsettle thy nerves and cause the blood to tingle in thy veins."

"While that man lives," whispered the demon of revenge, "thou wilt not know a moment's rest. Thou wilt think of him and of his death, rather than of thy vengeance against the Stadtholder."

"While that man lives," whispered the

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demon of jealousy, more insistently than did the other evil spirits, "Gilda will not cease to think of him; she will plead for him, she will try mayhap to save him; and then——"

And the Lord of Stoutenburg groaned aloud in the silence of the night, and paused in his restless walk. He drew a chair close to the table, and sat down; then, resting his elbows upon the table, he buried his head in his hands and remained thus motionless, but breathing heavily like one whose soul is fighting a losing battle.

THE minutes sped on. He had no means of gaging the time. It was just night, black impenetrable night. From down below came the murmur of all the bustle that was going on—the clang of arms, the measured footsteps which told of other alert human creatures who were waiting in excitement and tense expectancy for that dawn which still was far distant.

The minutes sped on the leaden feet of Time. How long the Lord of Stoutenburg had sat thus, silent and absorbed, he could not afterward have said. Perhaps, after all, he had fallen asleep, overcome with fatigue and with the constant sleeplessness of the past few days.

But anon he was wide awake, slightly shivering with the cold. The tallow candle was spluttering, almost dying out. With a steady hand the Lord of Stoutenburg snuffed the smoldering wick; the candle flickered up again.

Then he arose and quietly walked across the room. He pulled open the door and loudly called for Jan. A few minutes later Jan was at the door, silent, sullen, obedient as usual.

"My lord called?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Stoutenburg. "What hour is it?"

"Somewhere near six, I should say, my lord. I heard the tower clock at Ryswick strike five some time ago."

"How long is it before the dawn?"

"Two hours, my lord."

"Time to put up a gibbet, Jan? And to hang a man?"

"Plenty of time for that, my lord," replied Jan quietly.

"Then see to it, Jan, as speedily as you can. I feel that that man down below is our evil genius. While he lives Chance will be against us; of that I am as convinced as I am of the justice of our cause. If that man lives, Jan, the Stadtholder will escape us; I feel it in my bones. Something must have told me this in the night—it is a premonition that comes from above."

"Then the man must not live, my lord," said Jan coldly.

"You recognize that too, Jan, do you not?" rejoined Stoutenburg eagerly. "I am compelled in this—I won't say against my will, but compelled by a higher, a supernatural power. You, too, believe in the supernatural, do you not, my faithful Jan?"

"I believe, my lord, first and foremost in the justice of our cause. I hate the Stadtholder and would see him dead. Nothing in the world must place that great aim of ours in jeopardy."

Stoutenburg drew a deep breath of satisfaction.

"Then see to the gibbet, my good Jan," he said in a firm, almost lusty voice. "Have it erected on the farther side of the mill so that the jongejuffrouw's eyes are not scandalized by the sight.

"When everything is ready, come and let me know; and guard him well until then, Jan; guard him with your very life! I want to see him hang, remember that! Come and tell me when the gallows is ready, and I'll go to see him hang—I want to see him hang——"

And Jan, without another word, salutes the Lord of Stoutenburg and then goes out.

And thus it is that a quarter of an hour later the silence of the night is broken by loud and vigorous hammering. Jan sees to it all, and a gibbet is not difficult to erect.

The men grumble, of course; they are soldiers and not executioners, and their hearts for the most have gone out to that merry compeer, the Laughing Cavalier, with his quaint jokes and his cheerful laugh.

He has been sleeping soundly, too, for several hours, but now he is awake. Jan has told him that his last hour has come; time to put up a gibbet, with a few stiff planks taken from the storeroom of the mill and a length of rope.

He looks round him quite carelessly. Bah! Death has no terrors for such a splendid soldier as he. How many times hath he faced death ere this? Why, he was at Prague and other battles, where few escaped with their lives. He bears many a fine scar on that broad chest of his and

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none upon his back. A splendid fighter, if ever there was one!

But hanging? Bah!

The men murmur audibly as plank upon plank is nailed. Jan directs operations, while Piet the Red keeps guard over the prisoner. Two or three of the country louts know something of carpentering. They do the work under Jan's watchful eye. They grumble, but they work; for no one has been paid yet, and if you rebel you are like to be shot, and in any case you lose your pay.

And Diogenes, leaning up against the beam, watches with lazy, quaintly smiling eyes the preparations that are going on not a hundred paces away from him. After a while the darkness all around is beginning to yield to the slow insistence of dawn. It rises slowly behind the veils of mist which still envelop the distant east.

Gradually an impalpable grayness creeps around the mill; objects begin to detach themselves one by one out of the gloom—the moving figures of the mercenaries, the piles of arms heaped up here and there out of the damp, the massive beams, slimy and green, which support the mill, and a little farther on, the tall structure with a projecting arm around which great activity reigns.

DIOGENES watches it all with those same lazy eyes and that same good-humored smile still lingering around his lips. That tall structure over there, which still looks ghostlike through the mist, is for him. The game of life is done, and he has lost. Death is there at the end of the projecting arm, on which even now Jan is fixing a rope.

"Death in itself matters but little," mused the philosopher with his gently ironical smile. "I would have chosen another mode than hanging—but after all 'tis swift and sure; and of course, now, she will never know."

Know what, O Philosopher? What is it that she—Gilda, with the brown curls and the blue eyes, the proud, firm mouth and rounded chin—what is it that she will never know?

She will never know that a nameless, penniless soldier of fortune has loved her with every beat of his heart, every thought of his brain, with every sinew and every aspiration. She will never know that just in order to remain near her, when she was dragged away out of Rotterdam, he confronted deliberately the trap into which he fell. She will never know that for her dear sake he has borne humiliation against which every nerve of his splendid nature did inwardly rebel, owning to guilt and shame lest her blue eyes shed tears for a brother's sin.

She will never know that the warning to the Stadtholder came from him; and that he was neither a forger nor a thief, only just a soldier of fortune with a contempt for death, and an unspoken adoration for the one woman who seemed to him as distant from him as the stars.

But there were no vain regrets in him now; no regret of life, for this he always held in his own hand ready to toss it away for a fancy or an ideal; no regret of the might-have-been, because he was a philosopher, and the very moment that love for the unattainable was born in his heart, he had already realized that love to him could mean only a memory.

Therefore, when he watched the preparations out there in the mist, and heard the heavy blows upon the wooden planks and the murmurs of his sympathizers at their work, he only smiled—gently, self-deprecatingly, but always good-humoredly.

If the Lord of Stoutenburg only knew how little he really cared!

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### THE HOUR

A CURIOUSLY timid voice roused the philosopher from his dreams.

"Is there aught I can do for you, sir? Alas! My friend the Lord of Stoutenburg is deeply angered against you. I could do nothing with him on your behalf."

Diogenes turned his head in the direction whence had come the voice. He saw Nicolaes Beresteyn standing there in the cold gray mist, with his fur cloak wrapped closely up to his chin, and his face showing above the cloak, white and drawn.

The situation was not likely to escape Diogenes' irrepressible sense of humor.

"Mynheer Beresteyn!" he exclaimed. "*Dondersteen!* What brings your Mightiness here at this hour? A man on the point of death, sir, has no call for so pitiable a sight as is your face just now."

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"I heard from my Lord Stoutenburg what happened in the hut last night," said Beresteyn in a faltering voice, determined not to heed the other's bantering tone. "You exonerated me before my sister. Sir, this was a noble act—I would wish to thank you——"

"And do so with quaking voice and shaking knees," quoth Diogenes with unalterable good humor, through which there pierced, however, an obvious undercurrent of contempt. "Ye gods!" he added with a quaint sigh. "These men have not even the courage of their infamy!"

The words, the tone, the shrug of the shoulders which accompanied these, stung Nicolaes Beresteyn's dormant dignity to the quick.

"I do not wonder," he said more firmly, "that you feel bitter contempt for me now. Your generosity, for which I did not crave, hath placed me momentarily at a disadvantage before you. Yet, believe me, I would not be outdone by you in generosity; were it not for my allegiance to the Lord of Stoutenburg I would go straight to my sister now and confess my guilt to her.

"You believe me, I trust," he added, seeing that Diogenes' merry eyes were fixed mockingly upon him. "Did Fate allow it, I would gladly change places with you even now."

"I am about to hang, sir," quoth Diogenes lightly.

"Alas!"

"And you are forced, you say, to play a craven's part! Believe me, sir, I would not change places with you for a kingdom."

"I do believe you, sir," rejoined Beresteyn earnestly, "yet I would have you think of me as something less of a coward than I seem. Were I to make full confession to my sister now, I should break her heart—but it would not save your neck from the gallows."

"And a rogue's neck, sir, is of such infinitely less value than a good woman's heart! So, I pray you, say no more about it. Death and I are old acquaintances; oft hath he nodded to me in passing. We are about to become closer friends, that is all."

"Some day my sister shall know, sir, all that you have done for her and for me."

The ghost of a shadow passed over the Laughing Cavalier's face.

"That, sir, I think had best remain 'twixt you and me for all time. But this I would have you know—that when I accepted the ignoble bargain which you proposed to me in my friend Hals' studio, I did so because I thought that the jongejuffrouw would be safer in my charge, then, than in yours!"

Beresteyn was about to retort more hotly when Jan, closely followed by half a dozen men, came with swift, firm footsteps up to the prisoner. He saluted Beresteyn deferentially, as was his wont.

"Your pardon, mynheer," he said. "My lord hath ordered that the prisoner be forthwith led to execution."

Nicolaes' pale face became the color of lead.

"One moment, Jan," he said; "one moment. I must speak with my lord—I——"

"My lord is with the jongejuffrouw," said Jan curtly. "Shall I send to tell him that you desire to speak with him?"

"No, no! That is, I—I——" stammered Nicolaes, who indeed was fighting a cruel battle with his own weakness, his own cowardice now. It was that weakness which had brought him to the abject pass in which he now stood, face to face with the man whom he had affected to despise, and who was about to die, laden with the crimes which he, Nicolaes, had been the first to commit.

Stoutenburg's influence over him had been paramount; through it he had lost all sense of justice, of honor and of loyalty. Banded with murderers, he had ceased to recognize the very existence of honesty, and now he was in such a plight morally that though he knew himself to be playing an ignoble rôle, he did not see the way to throw up the part and to take up that of an honest man.

One word from him to Gilda, his frank confession of his own guilt, and she would know how so to plead for the condemned man that Stoutenburg would not dare to proceed with this monstrous act. But that word he had not the courage to speak.

WITH dull eyes and in sullen silence he watched Piet the Red untying under Jan's orders the ropes which held the prisoner to the beams, and then securing others to keep his arms pinioned behind his back. The mist now was of a faint silvery gray, and the objects around had that mysterious hushed air which the dawn alone can lend.

The men, attracted by the sight of a

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fellow creature in his last living moments, had gathered together in close knots of threes and fours. They stood by, glowering and somber, and had not Jan turned a wilfully deaf ear to their murmurings he would have heard many an ugly word spoken under their breath.

These were, of course, troublous and fighting times, when every man's hand was against some other, when every able-bodied man was first a soldier and then only a peaceable citizen. Nor was the present situation an uncommon one; the men could not know what the prisoner had done to deserve this summary punishment. He might have been a spy—an informer—or merely a prisoner of war. It was no soldier's place to interfere, only to obey orders and to ask no questions.

But they gave to the splendid personality of the condemned man the tribute of respectful silence. Whilst Jan secured the slender white hands of the prisoner, and generally made those awful preparations which even so simple a death as hanging doth demand, jests and oaths were stilled one by one; and among these rough fighting-men, not one head but was uncovered, not a back that was not straightened, not an attitude that was not one of deference and attention. Instinct—that unerring instinct of the soldier—had told them that here was no scamp getting his just reward, but a brave man going with a careless smile to his death.

"Has mynheer finished with the prisoner?" asked Jan, when he saw that Piet had finished his task and that the prisoner was ready to be led away. "Is there aught your Greatness would still desire to say to him?"

"Only this," said Beresteyn firmly; "that were his hands free I would ask leave to grasp them."

A look of kindly amusement fell from the prisoner's eyes upon the pale face of the young man.

"I have never known you, sir, save by a quaint nickname," continued Beresteyn earnestly, "but surely you have kith and kin somewhere. Have you no father or mother living whom you will leave to mourn?"

The prisoner made no immediate reply. The smile of kindly amusement still lingered around his lips; but presently, with an instinctive gesture of pride, he threw back his head and looked around him, as one who has nothing to fear and but little to regret. He met the sympathetic glance cast on him by the man who had done him—was still doing him—an infinite wrong, and all around those of his mute and humble friends, who seemed to be listening eagerly now for the answer which he would give to mynheer.

Then with a quick sweep his eyes suddenly rested on the wooden structure beyond the mill that loomed out so tragically through the mist, pointing with its one weird arm to some infinite distance far away. Something in the gentle pathos of this humble deference that encompassed him, something mayhap in the solemnity of that ghostly arm, suddenly seemed to melt the thin crust of his habitual flippancy. He looked back on Beresteyn and said softly:

"I have a friend, Frans Hals—the painter of pictures. Tell him, when next you see him, that I am glad his portrait of me is finished, and that I asked God to bless him for all that his goodness has meant to me in the past."

Beresteyn would have spoken again, but now Jan interposes once more, humbly but firmly. He approaches the prisoner again.

"My lord's orders," he now says briefly; "and time presses, mynheer."

Beresteyn stands back, smothering a sigh. The groups part and the little procession is formed; Jan on ahead, then Piet the Red and the six soldiers with the prisoner between them. Only a few steps divide them from the gruesome structure that looms more solidly now out of the mist. Beresteyn, wrapping his head up in his cloak to shut out sound and sight, walks rapidly away in the opposite direction.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### *SAUVE QUI PEUT!*

THEN it is that out of the thickness of the fog a figure suddenly emerges running and panting; a man has fallen up against the group of soldiers who have just halted beside the gibbet.

"It is Lucas of Sparendam come back from Delft!" they cry, as soon as they recognize the stained face, wet with the frost and the mist.

Already Jan, who with Piet's help was busy with the rope, has heard the name. His wan, thin face has become the color of ashes.

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"Lucas of Sparendam back from Delft!" he murmurs. "The Lord save us all!"

Lucas of Sparendam was sent the day before to Delft by the Lord of Stoutenburg to spy and to find out all that was going on inside the Prinsenhof, where slept the Stadtholder and his bodyguard of one hundred men-at-arms; and now he has come back running and panting: his clothes torn, his face haggard and spent. He has run all the way from Delft—a matter of a league and a half! Why should a man half kill himself by endeavoring to cover a league and a half in one hour?

"A drop of hot wine for Lucas!" cries one of the soldiers. "He is faint."

The other men—there are close to forty all told—crowd around the gibbet now. Those in charge of the prisoner have much ado to keep the space clear. They say nothing as yet, but there is a strange, restless look in their eyes, and their lips tremble with all the unspoken questions.

Only two men remain calm and silent. Jan has never ceased in his task of adjusting the ropes, and the prisoner stands quite still, bound with cords, and looking neither on Lucas nor yet on the gibbet above him. His eyes are half closed, and there is a strained look on his merry face, as if he were trying to listen to something that was too far off to hear.

But one man, in the meantime, is ready with the bottle of spiced wine, the best cordial there is for a fainting man. The others make way for him so that he can minister to Lucas. And Lucas drinks the wine eagerly; then he opens his eyes.

"We are betrayed," he murmurs.

"Great Heavens!" exclaims Jan dully.

Betrayed!

What does it mean?

No one heeds the prisoner now. They all crowd around Lucas. Jan calls out his orders in vain; Piet the Red alone listens to what he says; the others all want to know what Lucas means. They have been in the thick of a plot, of course; they all know that; a *guet-apens* has been prepared by the Lord of Stoutenburg for the Stadtholder whom he hates. The heavy boxes, of course—gunpowder, to blow up the wooden bridge when the Stadtholder and his escort are half way across!

Of course they had all guessed it, thought on it all through the night while they polished the arms—the swords and the pistols and the muskets—which had been served out to them. They had guessed, of course—the foreign mercenaries who were always in the thick of every conspiracy and well paid for being so—they had been the first to guess, and they had told the country louts, who only grinned, enjoying the prospect of the fun.

But now they were betrayed! Lucas of Sparendam had come back with the news, and even Jan stopped in his hideous task in order to listen to what he has to say.

"It all happened yesterday," says Lucas as soon as he has recovered his breath. "The rumor began in the lower quarters of the town. Nobody knows who began it. Some say that a foreigner came into the city in the early morning and sat down at one of the taverns to eat and drink with the Prince's soldiers."

"A foreigner?"

Jan turns to look on the prisoner and encounters his mocking glance. Smothering a curse, he resumes his task of adjusting the rope upon the gibbet, but his fingers are unsteady and his work does not progress.

"Yes, a foreigner," continues Lucas volubly, "though it all has remained very mysterious. The Prince's soldiers spoke of it amongst themselves. The foreigner had said something about a *guet-apens*, a plot against the Stadtholder's life on his way to the north. Then one of the officers heard the rumor and carried it to one of his superiors. By the evening it had reached the Stadtholder's ears."

"Then what happened?" they all ask eagerly.

"Nothing for some hours," replies Lucas, "but I know that spies were sent 'round in every direction, and that by midnight there was general talk in the city that the Stadtholder would not continue his journey to the north. When the Captain of the Guard came to him for orders the Prince said curtly, 'We do not start tomorrow!'

"As soon as I heard of this I made preparations. It was then an hour after midnight. I was still alert and listening; all around me, as I made ready to leave the city, I heard rumors among the soldiers and spies of the Stadtholder, of their knowledge of a lonely spot—a deserted mill—near Ryswick, where they declared many men did lately congregate.

"I heard, too, that soon after dawn the Prince's guard would make straight for the

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mill, so I put on my snowshoes and started to run, despite the darkness and the fog, for we are all betrayed and the Stadtholder's soldiers will be on us in a trice."

HARDLY are the words out of Lucas of Sparendam's mouth than the commotion begins, the disbanding; there is a roar and a bustle and a buzz—metal clashing, men rushing, cries of: "We are betrayed! *Sauve qui peut!*"

At first there is a general stampede for the places where the arms are kept—the muskets and swords—but these are thrown down almost as soon as they are picked up. They are of no use now, and worse than useless in a flight. But pistols are useful, in case of pursuit—quick, turn, fire! . . . So where are the pistols? . . . Jan, where are those pistols?

There are not enough to go around; about a dozen were served out last night, and there are forty pairs of hands determined each to possess one at least. So they begin to fight for them, tearing one another to pieces, shouting execrations, beating around with bare fists, since the other arms have already been laid down.

Now the confusion becomes worse than any that might reign among a herd of animals that are ready to rend one another. They tear the clothes off one another's backs, the skin off one another's faces; fear—hideous, overwhelming, abject fear—has made wild beasts of these men. The mist envelops them; it is barely light in this basement beneath the mill—lanthorns have long ago been kicked into extinction.

The hot breath of forty panting throats mingles with the mist, and the heat of human bodies fever-heated with passion fights against the strength of the frost. The frozen ground yields under the feet; clots of mud are thrown up by the stampede; from the beams up aloft the heavy icicles melt and drip monotonously, incessantly down upon those faces, red and perspiring in an agony of demented fear.

Jan and Piet the Red stand alone beside the prisoner; a sense of duty, of decency, has kept their blood cool. Until they are relieved from their post of guarding this man by orders from their lord, they will not move. Let the others rage and scream and tumble over one another; there must be at least a few soldiers among this rabble.

And the prisoner looks on all this confusion with eyes that dance and sparkle with the excitement of what is yet to come. Torn rags and broken accouterments soon lie in a litter in the mud, trampled in by forty pairs of feet. There is not one face now that is not streaked with blood, not one throat that is not hoarse with terror—the terror of the unknown.

In vain Jan from his post beside the prisoner shouts, harangues, appeals, threatens. A fight? Yes! Defeat? Why not? But betrayal! . . . No, no, let's away! The Stadtholder is fiercer than any inquisitor of Spain—his cruelty last February almost turned the nation against him. But now—this second conspiracy—Stoutenburg again! What hope for his followers?

The horrors of last February perpetrated in the Gevangenpoort of 'S Gravenhage still cause many a rough cheek to blanch at their recollection. Men had gone mad who had heard the cries which pierced those stone walls then.

One executioner had thrown down his bloody tools and fled from the place like one possessed! Van Dyk and Korenwinder, Slatius and the rest had been in hell ere a merciful death at last released them from the barbaric cruelty of the Prince of Orange.

No, no! Such a fate can not be risked! We are betrayed! Let us fly!

Suddenly one man starts to run.

"I am for the coast!" he shouts, and incontinently takes to his heels.

"*Sauve qui peut!*"

Like irresponsible creatures they throw down the very weapons for which they have been fighting. The one man has given the signal for the run. Everything now is thrown aside; there is no thought save for flight.

A splashing of the mud, a general shout, a scramble, a clatter; they run, they run—crying to those who are behind to follow and run too!

In five minutes the dark basement is clear of noise. A litter of broken arms lies in one heap close by; others are scattered all over the ground in the mud, together with torn clothing, rags of leather and of cloth and great red pools that mingle with the melted ice.

The mist surrounds it all, this abandoned battlefield wherein fear was the victor over man. The swiftly flying figures are soon swallowed up by the gray veil which lies dense and heavy over the lowland around.

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For a time they appear like ghosts, with blurred outlines of torn doublets and scraps of felt hats placed awry; then the outline grows more dim as they run, and the kindly mist hides them from view.

UNDER the mill all is silent now. Jan and Piet the Red guard the prisoner alone. The gallows is ready, or nearly so, but there is no one to send to the Lord of Stoutenburg to tell him this, and it would not be safe to leave the prisoner unguarded.

Only, from time to time Jan looks to see that the ropes still hold fast, but for the most part his eyes are fixed upon the mist on his left, for that way lies Delft, and thence will loom out by and by the avenging troops sent by the Prince of Orange.

Now that all those panting, perspiring human creatures have gone, the frost is more bitter, more biting than before; but neither Piet nor Jan seems to heed it, though their flesh is blue with the cold. Overhead there is a tramp of feet; the noble mynheers must have heard the confusion, they must have seen the flight; they are even now preparing to do in a slightly more dignified way what the foreign mercenaries and the louts from the country have done so incontinently.

The prisoner, hearing this tramp of feet over his head, looks more alertly around him. He sees that Jan and Piet have remained on guard even while the others have fled. He also sees the pile of arms, the broken metal, the rags and the mud, and through the interstices of the wooden steps the booted feet of the mynheers running helterskelter down; and a mad, merry laugh, that holds a world of joy in its rippling tones, breaks from his lips.

The next moment from far away comes a weird cry through the mist. A fox on the alert tries to lure his prey with that quaint cry of his, which appeals to the young birds and encourages them to come. What should a fox be doing on these ice-covered tracks? He must have strayed from very far—from over the moor, mayhap, beyond Gonda; hunger no doubt has made a wanderer of him, an exile from his home.

Jan listens, greatly astonished; what should a fox be doing here? Piet is impassive; he knows nothing of the habits of foxes; sea wolves are more familiar to him. With his eyes instinctively Jan questions the prisoner.

"What should a fox be doing here on these ice-bound flats?" he mutely asks.

But the prisoner apparently cares nothing about the marvels of nature, cares nothing about exiled foxes. His head is erect; his eyes dance with glee; a happy smile lights up his entire face.

Jan remembered that the others last night had called the wounded man the Laughing Cavalier. A cavalier he looked, every inch of him. The ropes mattered nothing, nor the torn clothing; proud, triumphant, happy, he was laughing with all the light-hearted gaiety which pertains to youth.

The Laughing Cavalier, forsooth! Lucky devil, if he can laugh! Jan sighed, and wondered when the Lord of Stoutenburg would relieve him from his post.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### THE LOSER PAYS

NICOLAES BERESTEYN had not gone far when Lucas of Sparendam came running with the news. He heard it all; he saw the confusion, the first signs of *sauve qui peut.*

At first he was like one paralyzed with horror and with fear; he could not move; his limbs refused him service. Then he thought of his friends—some up in the mill, others at various posts on the road and by the bridge; they might not hear the confusion and the tumult, they might not see the coming *sauve qui peut;* they might not hear that the Stadtholder's spies are on the alert and that his bodyguard might be here at any time.

Just then the disbanding began. Nicolaes Beresteyn pushed his way through the fighting, quarreling crowd to where Lucas of Sparendam, still exhausted and weak, was leaning up against a beam.

"Their lordships up in the mill," he said in a voice still choked with fear, "and the Lord of Stoutenburg in the hut with the jongejuffrouw . . . . come and tell them at once all that you know."

And he dragged Lucas of Sparendam in his wake.

The Lord of Stoutenburg was at Gilda's feet when Beresteyn ran in with Lucas to tell him the news.

After he had given Jan the orders to prepare the gallows for the summary execution

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of the prisoner he had resumed his wild, restless pacing up and down the room. There was no remorse in him for his inhuman and cowardly act, but his nerves were all on the jar, and that perpetual hammering which went on in the distance drove him to frantic exasperation.

A picture of the happenings in the basement down below would obtrude itself upon his mental vision; he saw the prisoner, careless, contemptuous, ready for death; Jan, sullen but obedient; the men murmuring and disaffected. He felt as if the hammering were now directed against his own head. He could have screamed aloud with the agony of this weary, expectant hour.

Then he thought of Gilda. Slowly the dawn was breaking; the hammering had ceased; silence reigned in the basement below after the turbulence of the past hour. The Lord of Stoutenburg did not dare conjecture what this silence meant.

The thought of Gilda became more insistent. He snatched up a cloak; and, wrapping it closely around him, he ran out into the mist. Quickly descending the steps, he at once turned his back on the basement where the last act of the supreme tragedy would be enacted presently. He felt like a man pursued, with Nemesis close to his heels.

He hoped to find rest and peace beside Gilda; he would not tell her that he had condemned the man to death. Let her forget him peaceably and naturally; the events of today would surely obliterate other matters from her mind. What was the life of a foreign vagabond beside the destinies of Holland, which an avenging God would help to settle to-day?

The Lord of Stoutenburg had walked rapidly to the hut, where he hoped to find Gilda ready to receive him. He knocked at the door, and Maria opened it for him. To his infinite relief she told him that the jongejuffrouw had broken her fast and would gladly speak with him.

Gilda, he thought, looked very pale and fragile in the dim light of two or three tallow candles placed in sconces about the room. There were dark circles around her eyes, and a pathetic trembling of her lips proclaimed the near presence of tears.

But there was an atmosphere of peace in the tiny room, with its humble little bits of furniture, and the huge earthenware stove from which the pleasing glow of a wood fire emanated and shed a cheerful radiance around.

The Lord of Stoutenburg felt that here in Gilda's presence he could forget his ambitions and his crimes, the man whom he was so foully putting to death, his jealousies, and even his revenge.

HE DREW a low chair close to her, and half sitting, half kneeling, began speaking to her as gently, as simply as his harsh voice and impatient temperament would allow. He spoke mostly about the future, touching only very casually on the pain which she had caused him by her unjust suspicions of him.

Gilda listened to him in silence for a while. She was collecting all her will-power, all her strength of purpose for the task which lay before her—the task of softening a hardened and treacherous heart, of rousing in it a spark of chivalry and of honor so that it showed mercy where it now threatened injustice, cruelty and almost unhuman cowardice.

A brave man's life was in the hands of this man who professed love for her; and though Gilda rejected that love with contempt, she meant, womanlike, to use that love as a mainspring for the softened mood which she wished to call forth.

The first thought that had broken in upon her, after a brief and troubled sleep, was that a brave young life would be sacrificed to-day to gratify the petty spite of a fiend. She had been persuaded yesterday that the man who, though helpless and pinioned, stood before her in all the splendor of manhood and of a magnificent personality, was nothing but a common criminal—a liar, a forger and a thief.

Though this thought should have made her contented, since by bringing guilt home to a man who was nothing to her it exonerated her brother whom she loved, she had been conscious all night, right through the disturbing dreams which had floated through her consciousness, that a leaden weight sat upon her heart, like the sense of the commission of some great and irreparable wrong. Indeed, she felt that, if here in this very place which he had filled last night—despite his apparent helplessness—with his exuberant vitality, she had to think of him as silent and cold for all eternity, such a thought would drive her mad.

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The Lord of Stoutenburg's honeyed words fell unheeded on her ear; his presence near her filled her with horror; she kept up only a semblance of interest in him, because he held the fate of another man in the hollow of his hand.

She was preparing in her mind what she was going to say to him; she rehearsed the words which were most likely to appeal to his callous nature. Already she was nerving herself for the supreme effort of pleading for a brave man's life, when suddenly the tramping of heavy feet outside the hut, confused shouts and the clang of arms, caused Stoutenburg to jump to his feet.

The door was torn open, and Nicolaes Beresteyn stood for a moment on the threshold, pale, speechless, with body trembling and moisture thick upon his brow. Lucas of Sparendam was close behind him, equally pale and still.

At first sight of her brother Gilda had uttered a little cry of joy; but that cry soon died upon her lips. Beresteyn had scarcely looked on her; his glance at once had found that of Stoutenburg, and the two men seemed to understand one another.

"We are betrayed?" cried Stoutenburg hoarsely.

Beresteyn nodded in reply.

"How?"

Lucas of Sparendam in short jerky sentences retold once more the tale of all that had happened at Delft: the Prince of Orange warned, the spies whom he had sent broadcast, the bodyguard which even now was on its way.

"They know of this place," murmured Beresteyn between quivering lips; "they might be here at any moment!"

Through the open door there came the noise of the men fighting, the cries of rage and of fear, the clatter of metal and the tramping of many feet.

"They are scared and half mad," said Lucas of Sparendam. "In five minutes the *sauve qui peut* will commence."

"We are quite near the coast," said Stoutenburg with outward calm, though his voice was choked and his tongue cleaved to the roof of his mouth.

"Go you and tell the others, Beresteyn," he added, turning to his friend; "then collect all our papers that are in the mill. Thank Heaven, there are only a few that might compromise us at all. Heemskerk and van Does will help you; they are not like to be seized with panic.

"We can then make quietly for Scheveningen, where the boats are ready. There is a sledge here, and a pair of horses which I shall need; but it is less than a league to Scheveningen, and you can all walk it easily. Tell the others not to lose time, and I will follow with the sledge as soon as may be. There is no cause for a panic, and we can all save ourselves."

Beresteyn made ready to go. He took less pains than Stoutenburg to conceal his terror, and his knees frankly shook under him. At the door he paused. He had suddenly remembered Gilda.

She had risen from her chair, and stood now like a statue carved in stone, white to the lips, wide-eyed, her whole expression one of infinite horror.

IT HAD all been lies then, all that this man had told her yesterday! He had concealed the monstrous truth, lying to her with every word he uttered. Now he stood there, pale and trembling, the traitor who in his turn has been betrayed. Fear and blind rage were fighting their last deathly battle in his soul.

The edifice of his treachery was crumbling around him; God's hand—through an unknown channel—had set the limit to his crimes. Twice a traitor, he had twice failed. Already he could see the disbanding of his mercenary troops, the beginning of that mad, wild flight to the coast; and down the steps of the mill his friends, too, were running helterskelter, without thought of anything save of their own safety.

It would be so immeasurably horrible to fall into the Stadtholder's hands!

And Gilda, pale and silent, stood between the two men who had lied to her, outraged her to the end. Nicolaes was a traitor after all; he had cast the eternal shroud of shame over the honor and peace of his house. If God did not help him now, his death would complete that shame.

She tried to hold his glance, but he would not look at her; she felt that his wrath against her almost bordered on hatred, because he believed that she had betrayed them all. His eyes were fixed upon his leader and friend, and all the anxiety which he felt was for that one man.

"You must not delay, Nicolaes," said Stoutenburg curtly. "Go warn the others

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and tell them to make for Scheveningen. But do you wait for me—we'll follow anon in the sledge, and of course Gilda comes with us."

And Beresteyn said firmly—

"Of course Gilda comes with us."

She was not afraid even when he said this, even when his fierce glance rested upon her; and she was too proud to make an appeal to him. It was her turn now to avert her glance from him; to the bottom of her soul she loathed his cowardice, and the contempt with which she regarded him now was almost cruel in its intensity.

He went out of the room, followed by Lucas of Sparendam; and now she was once more alone with the Lord of Stoutenburg.

"Gilda," he cried with a fierce oath, "when did you do this?"

"It was not I, my lord," she replied calmly. "You and Nicolaes did all that lay in your power to render me helpless in this. God knows I would not have betrayed you—it is His hand that hath pointed the way to one who was more brave than I."

"'Tis false!" he exclaimed violently. "No one knew of our plans save those who now must flee because, like us, they have been betrayed. No sane man would wilfully put his head in the halter; and there are no informers amongst us."

"You need not believe me, my lord," she rejoined coldly, "if you do not wish. But remember that I have never learned the art of lying, nor could I be the Judas to betray mine own brother. Therefore do I pledge you my word that I had no share in this decree of God."

"If not yourself," he retorted, "you spoke of it to some one who went to the Stadtholder and warned him—to some one—some one who——

"Ah!" he cried suddenly, with a loud and ghoulish scream wherein rage, horror and fear—and a kind of savage triumph, too—rang out. "I see that I have guessed aright. You did speak of what you knew—to the miserable knave whom Nicolaes paid to outrage you; and you offered him money to betray your own brother!"

"It is false!"

"It is true—I can read it in your face. That man went to Delft yesterday—he was captured by Jan on his way back to Rotterdam. He had fulfilled your errand and warned the Prince of Orange, and delivered me and all my friends into hands that never have known mercy!"

He was blind with passion now and looked on her with bloodshot eyes that threatened death. But Gilda was not cast in the same mold as this traitor. Baffled in his crime, fear had completely unmanned him; but with every cry of rage uttered by Stoutenburg she became more calm and less afraid.

"Once more, my lord," she said quietly, in the brief interval of Stoutenburg's ravings and while he was forced to draw breath, "do I pledge my word to you that I had no hand in saving the Stadtholder's life. That God chose for this another instrument than myself, I do thank Him on my knees."

While she spoke Stoutenburg had made a quick effort to regain some semblance of composure, and now he contrived to say quite calmly and with an evil sneer upon his face:

"That instrument of God is, if I mistake not, tied to a post with ropes, like an ox ready for the butcher's hand. Though I have but sorry chances of escape myself and every minute has become precious, I can at least spend five in making sure that his fate shall at any rate be sorrier than mine."

Her face became if possible even paler than before.

"What do you mean to do?" she murmured.

"The man who has betrayed me to the Prince of Orange is the same man as he who laid hands upon you in Haarlem—is that not so?"

"I can not say," she said firmly.

"The same man who was here in this room yesterday, bound and pinioned before you?" he insisted.

"I do not know."

"Will you swear, then, that you never spoke to him of the Prince of Orange, and of our plans?"

"Not of your plans," she protested calmly.

"You see that you can not deny it, Gilda," he continued, with that same unnatural calm which seemed to her far more horrible than his rage had been before. "Wittingly or unwittingly you let that man know what you overheard in the Groote Kerk on New Year's Eve. Then you bribed him into warning the Prince of Orange, since you could not do it yourself."

"It is false!" she reiterated wildly.



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ONCE more that evil sneer distorted his pale face.

"Well," he said, "whether you bribed him or no, matters to me but little. I do believe that willingly you would not have betrayed Nicolaes or me or any of our friends to the Stadtholder, knowing what he is. But you wanted to cross our plans, you wanted to warn the Stadtholder of his danger, and you—not God—chose that man for your instrument."

"It is not true—I deny it!" she repeated fearlessly.

"You may deny it with words, Gilda, but your whole attitude proclaims the truth. Thank God!" he cried with a note of savage triumph in his voice. "That man is still a helpless prisoner in my hands."

"What do you mean?" she murmured.

"I mean that it is good to hold the life of one's deadliest enemy in the hollow of one's hand!"

"But you would not slay a defenseless prisoner!" she cried.

He laughed a bitter, harsh, unnatural laugh.

"Slay him!" he cried. "Aye, that I will, if it is not already done. Did you hear the hammering and the knocking a while ago? It was Jan making ready the gibbet. And now, though the men have run away like so many *verdommde* cowards, I know that Jan at any rate has remained faithful to his post.

"The gibbet is still there; and Jan and I and Nicolaes, we have three pairs of hands between us, strong enough to make an enemy swing 'twixt earth and heaven, and three pairs of eyes wherewith to see an informer perish upon the gallows."

But already she had interrupted him with a loud cry of overwhelming horror.

"Are you a fiend to think of such a thing?"

"No," he replied, "only a man who has a wrong to avenge."

"The wrong was in your treachery," she retorted, even while indignation nearly choked the words in her throat. "No honest man could refuse to warn another that a murderous trap had been laid for him."

"Possibly. But through that warning given by a man whom I hate, my life is practically at an end."

"Life can be ended only by death," she pleaded, "and yours is in no danger yet. In a couple of hours, as you say, you will have reached the coast. No doubt you have taken full measures for your safety. The Stadtholder is sick. He hath scarce a few months to live; when he dies everything will be forgotten and you can return and begin your life anew. Oh, you will thank God then on your knees, that this last hideous crime doth not weigh upon your soul!"

"A wrong unavenged would weigh my soul down with bitterness," he said somberly. "My life is done, Gilda. Ambition, hope, success—everything that I care for has gone from me. Nicolaes may begin his life anew; he is young, and his soul is not, like mine, consumed with ambition and with hatred.

"But for that one man, I were today Stadtholder of half our Provinces and sole ruler of our United Netherlands; instead of which, from this hour forth I shall be a fugitive, a pariah, an exile.

"All this do I owe to one man," he added fiercely; "and I take my revenge—that is all!"

He made as if ready to go; but Gilda, with a moan of anguish, had already held him back. Despite the loathing which the slightest contact with such a fiend caused her, she clung with both her hands to his arm.

"My lord!" she entreated. "In the name of your dear mother, in the name of all that is yet good and pure and noble in you, do not allow this monstrous crime to add to the heavy load of sin which rests upon your soul!

"God is just," she added earnestly; "God will punish us all if such an infamy is done now at this supreme hour, when our destinies are being weighed in the balance."

But he looked down on her suddenly, with an evil leer which sent a chill right through her to her heart.

"Are you pleading for a man who mayhap hath sent your brother to the scaffold?" he asked.

His glance now was so dark and so cruel, the suspicion which lurked in it was so clear, that for the moment Gilda was overawed by this passion of hate and jealousy which she was unable to fathom. The quick, hot blood of indignation rushed to her pale cheeks.

"It was of Nicolaes that I was thinking," she said proudly. "If that man dies now, I feel that such a dastardly crime would remain a lasting stain upon the honor of our house."

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"The crime is on you, Gilda," he retorted, "in that you did betray us all. Wittingly or unwittingly, you did deliver me into the hands of my most bitter enemy. But I pray you, plead no more for a knave whom you surely must hate even more bitterly than I do hate him. The time goes by, and every wasted minute becomes dangerous now. I pray you, make yourself ready to depart."

SHE had not yet given up all thoughts of pleading; though she knew that for the moment she had failed, there floated vaguely at the back of her mind a dim hope that God would not abandon her in this, her bitterest need. He had helped her in her direst trouble; He had averted the hideous treachery which threatened to stain her father's honored name and her own with a hideous mark of shame; surely He would not allow this last, most terrible crime to be committed.

No doubt that vague frame of mind, born of intense bodily and mental fatigue, betrayed itself in the absent expression in her eyes, for Stoutenburg reiterated impatiently—

"I can give you a quarter of an hour wherein to make ready."

"A quarter of an hour," she murmured vaguely, "to make ready? For what?"

"For immediate departure with me and your brother for Belgium."

Still she did not understand. A deep frown of puzzlement appeared between her brows.

"Departure? With you? What do you mean, my lord?" she asked.

"I mean," he replied roughly, "that out of the wreckage of all my ambitions, my desires and my hopes I will at least save something that will compensate me for all that I have lost. You said just now that life could end only in death. Well, next to mine ambition and my desire for vengeance, you, Gilda, as you know, do fill my entire soul.

"With you beside me I may try to begin life anew. I leave for the coast in less than half an hour; Nicolaes will be with us, and he will care for you. But I will not go without you, so you must come with me."

"Never!" she said firmly.

But Stoutenburg only laughed with careless mockery.

"Who will protect you," he said, "when I take you in my arms and carry you to the sledge, which in a quarter of an hour will be ready for you? Who will protect you when I carry you in my arms from the sledge to the boat which awaits us at Scheveningen?"

"Nicolaes," she rejoined calmly, "is my brother—he would not permit such an outrage."

An ironical smile curled the corners of his cruel lips.

"Do you really think, Gilda," he said, "that Nicolaes will run counter to my will? I have but to persuade him that your presence in Holland will be a perpetual menace to our safety. Besides, you heard what he said just now—that you of course would come with us."

"My dead body you can take with you," she retorted, "but I, alive, will never follow you."

"Then 'tis your dead body I'll take, Gilda," he said with a sneer. "I will be here to fetch you in a quarter of an hour, so, I pray you, make ready while I go to deal with that meddlesome 'instrument of God.'"

She was spent now, and had no strength for more; a great numbness, an overpowering fatigue seemed to creep into her limbs. She even allowed him to take her hand and to raise it to his lips, for she was quite powerless to resist him; only when she felt those burning lips against her flesh a shudder of infinite loathing went right through her body.

Soon he turned on his heel and strode out of the room. She heard the thin wooden door fall to with a bang behind him; but she could no longer see; a kind of darkness had fallen over her eyes, a darkness in which only one figure appeared clearly—the figure of a man upon a gibbet. All else was blackness around her—impenetrable blackness, almost tangible in its intensity; and out of the blackness, which seemed like that of a dungeon, there came cries as of human creatures in hell.

"Lord have mercy upon him!" her lips, cold and white, murmured vaguely and insistently. "Lord have mercy upon him! Lord have mercy on us all!"

## CHAPTER XL

### VENGEANCE IS MINE!

IT WAS like a man possessed of devils that the Lord of Stoutenburg ran out through the mist toward the mill.

The gray light of this Winter's morning

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had only vaguely pierced the surrounding gloom, and the basement beneath the mill still looked impenetrably dark. Dark and silent! The soldiers—foreign mercenaries and louts—had vanished in the fog; arms hastily thrown down littered the mud-covered ground—swords, pistols, muskets, torn clothing, here and there a neck-cloth, a steel bonnet, a bright-colored sash. Stoutenburg saw it all, right through the gloom, and he ground his teeth together to smother a cry of agonized impotence.

Only now and then a ghostly form flitted, swift and silent, among the intricate maze of beams—a laggard left behind in the general scramble for safety, or a human scavenger on the prowl for loot. Now and then a groan or a curse came from the darkness, and a weird, shapeless, moving thing would crawl along in the mud like some creeping reptile seeking its lair.

But Stoutenburg looked neither to right nor left. He paid no heed to these swiftly fleeting, ghostlike forms. He knew well enough that he would find silence here, that three dozen men—cowards and mercenaries all—had been scattered like locusts before a gale. Overhead he heard the tramping of feet: his friends Beresteyn, Heemskerk, van Does, were making ready for flight. His one scheme of vengeance—that for which he had thirsted and plotted and sinned—had come to naught; but he had yet another in his mind—one which, if successful, would give him no small measure of satisfaction for the failure of the other.

On ahead the outline of the hastily improvised gallows detached itself out of the misty shroud, and from the Lord of Stoutenburg's throat there came a fierce cry of joy which surely must have delighted all the demons in hell.

He hurried on, covering with swift, eager steps the short distance that separated him from the gibbet. He called loudly to Jan, for it seemed to him as if the place was unaccountably deserted. He could not see Jan nor yet the prisoner, and surely Piet the Red had not proved a coward!

The solid beams above and around him threw back his call in reverberating echoes. He called again, and from far away a mocking laugh alone seemed to answer him.

Like a frightened beast now he bounded forward. There were the gallows, not five paces away from him. The planks hastily hammered together a while ago were creaking weirdly, buffeted by the wind; and up aloft the rope was swinging, beating itself with a dull, eerie sound against the wood.

The Lord of Stoutenburg, dazed and stupefied, looked on this desolate picture like a man in a dream.

"My lord!"

The voice came feebly from somewhere close by.

"My lord! For pity's sake!"

It was Jan's voice, of course. The Lord of Stoutenburg turned mechanically in the direction whence it came. Not far from where he was standing he saw Jan lying on the ground against a beam, with a scarf wound loosely around his mouth and his arms held with a cord behind his back. Stoutenburg unwound the scarf and untied the cord; then he murmured dully:

"Jan! What does this mean?"

"The men all threw down their arms, my lord," said Jan, as soon as he had struggled to his feet. "They ran like cowards when Lucas of Sparendam brought the news."

"I knew that," said Stoutenburg hoarsely; "curse them all for their miserable cowardice! But the prisoner, man, the prisoner! What have you done with him? Did I not order you to guard him with your life?"

"Then is mine own life forfeit, my lord," said Jan simply, "for I did fail in guarding the prisoner."

A violent oath broke from Stoutenburg's trembling lips. He raised his clenched fist, ready to strike in his blind, unreasoning fury the one man who had remained faithful to him to the last.

Jan slowly bent the knee.

"Kill me, my lord," he said calmly. "I could not guard the prisoner."

STOUTENBURG was silent for a moment; then his upraised arm fell nervelessly by his side.

"How did it happen?" he asked.

"I scarce can tell you, my lord," replied Jan; "the attack on us was so quick and sudden. Piet and I did remain at our post, but in the rush and the panic we presently were left alone beside the prisoner. Two men, who were his friends, must have been on the watch for this opportunity; they fell on us from behind and caught us unaware.

"We called in vain for assistance; it was a case of *sauve qui peut* and every one for himself. In a trice the cords that bound the

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prisoner were cut, and the three men had very quickly the best of us. Piet, though wounded in the leg, contrived to escape; but it almost seemed as if those three demons were determined to spare me.

"Though, by ——," added Jan fervently, "I would gladly have died rather than have seen all this shame! When they had brought me down they wound a scarf around my mouth and left me here tied to a beam, while they disappeared in the fog."

Stoutenburg made no comment on this brief narrative; even the power of cursing seemed to have deserted him. He left Jan kneeling there on the frozen ground, and without a word he turned on his heel and made his way once more between the beams under the mill back toward the hut.

Vengeance indeed had eluded his grasp. The two men whom on earth he hated most had remained triumphant, while he himself had been brought down to the lowest depths of loneliness and misery. Friendless, kinless now, life indeed, as he had told Gilda, was at an end for him. Baffled vengeance would henceforth make of him a perpetual exile and a fugitive, with every man's hand raised against him, a price once more upon his head.

The world doth at times allow a man to fail in the task of his life; it will forgive that one failure and allow the man to try again. But a second failure is unforgivable; men turn away from the blunderer in contempt. Who would risk life, honor and liberty in a cause that had twice failed?

Stoutenburg knew this. He knew that within the next hour his friends would already have practically deserted him. Panic-stricken now, they would accompany him as far as the coast; they would avail themselves of all the measures which he had devised for their mutual safety.

But in their innermost hearts they would already have detached themselves from his future ill fortune; and anon, in a few months mayhap, when the Stadtholder had succumbed to the disease which was threatening his life, they would all return to their homes and to their kindred and forget this brief episode wherein their leader's future had been so compeletely and so irretrievably wrecked.

They would forget. Only he, Stoutenburg, would remain the pariah, the exile, that carries the brand of traitor forever upon the pages of his life!

And now the hut is once more in sight; and for one brief instant an inward light flickers up in Stoutenburg's dulled eyes. Gilda is there, Gilda whom he loved, and whose presence in the sorrow-laden years that are to come would be a perpetual compensation for all the humiliation and all the shame which he had endured.

Today, mayhap, she would follow him unwillingly; but Stoutenburg's passion was proof against her coldness. He felt that he could conquer her, that he could win her love, when once he had her all to himself in a distant land; when she—kinless, too, and forlorn—would naturally turn to him for protection and for love. He had little doubt that he would succeed, and vaguely in his mind there arose the pale ray of hope that her love would then bring him luck, or at any rate put renewed energy in him to begin his life anew.

## CHAPTER XLI

### THE FIGHT IN THE DOORWAY

IT SEEMED to Stoutenburg that from the back of the hut there came the sound of bustle and activity; he thought that mayhap Beresteyn had had the good idea of making the sledge ready for departure, and he called out loudly to his friend.

It was a mocking voice, however, that arose in response—

"Was your Magnificence perchance looking for me?"

Out of the mist which still hung around the small building Diogenes' tall figure suddenly loomed out before the Lord of Stoutenburg. He was standing in the doorway of the hut, with his back to it. One hand—the right one—was thrust inside his doublet, the left was on the hilt of his sword. His battered hat was tilted rakishly above his brow and he was regarding his approaching enemy with a look of keen amusement and of scorn.

At first Stoutenburg thought that his fevered fancy was playing his eyes a weird and elusive trick; then, as the reality of what he saw burst fully upon his senses, he uttered a loud and hoarse cry like a savage beast that has been wounded.

"*Plepshurk! Smeerlap!*" he cried fiercely.

"Rogue! Villain! Menial! Varlet! And all that you care to name me, my lord!"

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quoth the philosopher lightly. "And entirely at your service."

"Jan!" cried Stoutenburg. "Jan! In the name of Heaven where are you?"

"Not very far, my lord," rejoined the other. "Jan is a brave soldier; but he was no match for three philosophers, even though one of them at first was trussed like a fowl.

"Jan stuck to his post, my lord, remember that," he added more seriously, "even when all your other followers and friends were scattered to the winds like a crowd of mice at the approach of a cat. We did not hurt Jan, because he is a brave soldier; but we tied him down lest he run to get assistance while assistance was still available."

"You insolent knave——"

"You speak rightly, my lord. I am an insolent knave, and do so rejoice in mine insolence that I stayed behind here—while my brother philosophers accomplish the task which I have put upon them—on purpose to exercise some of that insolence upon you, and to see what power a man hath to curb his temper and to look pleasant while an insolent knave doth tell him to his face that he is an abject and degraded cur!"

"Then, by Heaven, you abominable *plepshurk*," cried Stoutenburg, white with passion, "since you stayed here to parley with me, I can still give you so complete a retort that your final insolence will have to be spoken in hell! But let me pass now. I have business inside the hut."

"I know you have, my lord," rejoined Diogenes coolly, "but I am afraid that your business will have to wait until two philosophers, named respectively Pythagoras and Socrates, have had time to finish theirs."

"What do you mean? Let me pass, I tell you, or——"

"Or the wrath of your Magnificence will once more be upon mine unworthy head. *Dondersteen!* What have I not suffered already from that all-powerful wrath!"

"You should have been hanged ere this——"

"It is an omission, my lord, which I fear me we must now leave to the future to rectify."

"Stand aside, man!" cried Stoutenburg, who was hoarse with passion.

"No, not just yet," was the other's calm reply.

"Stand aside!" reiterated Stoutenburg wildly.

He drew his sword and made a quick thrust at his enemy; he remembered the man's wounded shoulder and saw that his right hand was temporarily disabled.

"Ah, my lord!" quoth Diogenes lightly, as with his left he drew Bucephalus out of its scabbard, "you had forgotten, or perhaps you never knew, that my sword is as much at home in my left hand as in my right!"

Like a bull goaded to fury, Stoutenburg made a second and more vigorous thrust at his opponent. But Diogenes was already on guard—calm, quiet in his movements, in the manner of the perfect swordsman. The Lord of Stoutenburg, hot with rage, impetuous and clumsy, was at once at a disadvantage, while this foreign adventurer, self-possessed and good-humored, had the art of the sword at his finger-tips —the art of perfect self-control, the art of not rushing to the attack, the supreme art of waiting for an opportunity.

No feint or thrust at first, only on guard, quietly on guard; and Bucephalus seemed to be infinitely multiplied at times, so quickly did the bright steel flash out in the gray light and then subside again.

Stoutenburg was at once conscious of his own disadvantage. He was no match for this brilliant sword-play; his opponent did indeed appear to be only playing with him, but Stoutenburg felt all the time that the abominable knave might disarm him at any moment if he were so minded.

Nor could he see very clearly; the passionate blood in him had rushed to his head and was beating furiously in his temples, while the other man, with the additional advantage of a good position against the wall, kept up a perfect fusillade of good-humored comments.

"WELL attacked, my lord!" he cried gaily. "*Dondersteen!* Were I as fat as your Magnificence supposes, your sword would ere now have made a hole in my side. Pity I am not broader, is it not? Or more in the way of your sword!

"There," he added, as with a quick and sudden turn of the wrist he knocked his opponent's weapon out of his hand. "Allow me to return you this most useful sword."

He had already stooped and picked up Stoutenburg's sword, and now was holding

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it with slender fingertips by the point of its blade; and smiling, urbane and mocking, he held it out at arm's length, bowing the while with courtly, ironical grace.

"Shall we call Jan, my lord," he said airily, "or one of your friends to aid you? Some of them, I noticed just now, seemed somewhat in a hurry to quit this hospitable mill, but mayhap one or two are still lingering behind!"

Stoutenburg, blind with rage, had snatched his sword back out of the scoffer's hand. He knew that the man was only playing with him, only keeping him busy here to prevent his going to Gilda. This thought threw him into a frenzy of excitement, and not heeding the other's jeers, he cried out at the top of his voice:

"Jan! Jan! Nicolaes! What ho!"

And the other man, putting his hand up to his mouth, also shouted lustily:

"Jan! Nicolaes! What ho!"

Had Stoutenburg been less blind and deaf to aught save to his own hatred and his own fury he would have heard, not many paces away, the sound of horses' hoofs upon the hard ground, the champing of bits, the jingle of harness. But of this he did not think — not just yet. His thoughts were only of Gilda, and that this man was holding the door of the hut because he meant to dispute with him the possession of Gilda.

He cast aside all sense of pride and shame. He was no match with a foreign mercenary whose profession was that of arms; there was no disgrace in his want of skill.

But he would not yield the ground to this adventurer who meant to snatch Gilda away from him. After all, the man had a wounded shoulder and a lacerated hip; with the aid of Jan and of Nicolaes he could soon be rendered helpless.

New hope arose in the Lord of Stoutenburg's heart, giving vigor to his arm. Now he heard the sound of running footsteps behind him; Jan was coming to his aid and there were others—Nicolaes, no doubt, and Heemskerk.

"My lord! My lord!" cried Jan, horrified at what he saw. He had heard the clang of steel against steel, and had caught up the first sword that came to his hand. His calls and those of Stoutenburg, as well as the more lusty ones of Diogenes, reached the ears of Beresteyn, who with his friend Heemskerk was making a final survey of the mill, to search for compromising papers that might have been left about. They, too, heard the cries and the clash of steel; they ran down the steps of the mill, only to meet Jan, who was hurrying toward the hut with all his might.

"I think my lord is being attacked," shouted Jan as he flew past, "and the jongejuffrouw is still in the hut."

These last words dissipated Nicolaes Beresteyn's sudden thoughts of cowardice. He, too, snatched up a sword, and, followed by Heemskerk, he ran in Jan's wake.

The stranger, so lately a prisoner condemned to hang, was in the doorway of the hut, with his back to it, his sword in his left hand, keeping my Lord of Stoutenburg at arm's length. Jan, Nicolaes and Heemskerk were on him in a trice.

"Two, three, how many of you?" queried Diogenes with a laugh, as with smart *riposte* he met with three blades that suddenly flashed out against him. "Ah, Mynheer Beresteyn, my good Jan, I little thought that I would see you again."

"Let me pass, man!" cried Beresteyn. "I must to my sister."

"Not yet, friend," he replied, "till I know what your intentions are."

For one instant Beresteyn appeared to hesitate. The kindly sentiment which had prompted him a while ago to speak sympathetic words to a condemned man who had taken so much guilt upon his shoulders, still fought in his heart against his hatred for the man himself.

Since that tragic moment at the foot of the gallows, which had softened his mood, Beresteyn had learned that it was this man who had betrayed him and his friends to the Stadtholder, and guessed that it was Gilda who had instigated or bribed him into that betrayal. And now the present position seemed to bring vividly before his mind the picture of that afternoon in "The Lame Cow" at Haarlem, when the knave whom he had paid to keep Gilda safely out of the way was bargaining with his father to bring her back.

All the hatred of the past few days—momentarily lulled in the face of a tragedy—rose up once more with renewed intensity in his heart. Here was the man who had betrayed him, and who, triumphant, was about to take Gilda back to Haarlem and receive a fortune for his reward.

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While Heemskerk, doubtful and hesitating, wondered if it were wise to take up Stoutenburg's private quarrels rather than follow his other friends to Scheveningen, where safety lay, Jan and Beresteyn, vigorously aided by Stoutenburg, made a concerted attack upon the knave.

BUT it seemed as easy for Bucephalus to deal with three blades as with one; now it appeared to have three tongues of pale gray flame, that flashed hither and thither—backward, forward, left, right, above, below, parry, *riposte*, an occasional thrust—and always quietly on guard.

Diogenes was in his gayest humor, laughing and shouting with glee. To any one less blind with excitement than were these men it would soon have been clear that he was shouting for the sole purpose of making a noise, a noise louder than the hammering, the jingling, the knocking that was going on at the back of the hut.

To right and left of the front of the small building a high wooden paling ran for a distance of a hundred paces or so, enclosing a rough yard with a shed in the rear. It was impossible to see over the palings what was going on behind them, and so loudly did the philosopher shout and laugh and so vigorously did steel strike against steel that it was equally impossible to make out the sounds that came from there.

But suddenly Stoutenburg was on the alert. Something had caught his ear, a sound that rose above the din that was going on in the doorway—a woman's piercing shriek. Even the clang of steel could not drown it, nor the lusty shouts of the fighting philosopher.

For a second he strained his ears to listen. It seemed s if invisible hands were suddenly tearing down the wooden palisade that hid the rear of the small building from his view; before his mental vision a whole picture rose to sight. A window at the back of the hut broken in, Gilda carried away by the friends of this accursed adventurer—Jan had said that two came to his aid at the foot of the gallows—Maria screaming, the sledge in wait, the horses ready to start.

"My Heaven! I had not thought of that!" he cried. "Jan! Nicolaes! In Heaven's name! Gilda! After me! Quick!"

And then he starts to run, skirting the palisade in the direction whence come now quite distinctly that ceaseless rattle, that jingle and stamping of the ground which proclaims the presence of horses on the point of departure.

"Jan! In Heaven's name, follow me!" cries Stoutenburg, pausing one instant ere he rounds the corner of the palisade. "Nicolaes, leave that abominable knave! Gilda, I tell you! Gilda! They are carrying her away!"

Jan already has obeyed, grasping his sword; he does not pause to think. My lord has called, and 'tis my lord whom he follows. He runs after Stoutenburg as fast as his tired limbs will allow. Heemskerk, forgetting his own fears in the excitement of this hand-to-hand combat, follows in their wake.

Nicolaes too, at Stoutenburg's call, is ready to follow him.

He turns to run, when a grasp of iron falls upon his arm, holding it like a vice. He could have screamed with the pain, and the sword which he holds falls out of his nerveless fingers. The next moment he feels himself dragged by that same iron grasp through the open door into the hut, and hears the door slammed to and locked behind him.

"Your pardon if I have been rough, mynheer," said Diogenes' pleasant voice, "but there was no time to argue outside that door, and you seemed in such a mighty hurry to run straight into that yawning abyss of disgrace."

The grasp upon his arm had not relaxed, but it no longer hurt. Yet it was so firm and so absolute that Nicolaes felt powerless to wrench himself away.

"Let me go!" he cried hoarsely.

"Not just yet, mynheer," rejoined Diogenes coolly; "not while this hot temper is upon you. Let the Lord of Stoutenburg and our friend Jan fight to their hearts' content with a fat philosopher who is well able to hold his own against them, while the other, who is lean and a moderately good coachman, sees that a pair of horses do not rear and bolt during the fray."

"Let me go, man, I tell you!" cried Beresteyn, who was making frantic efforts to free himself from that slender white hand which held his arm as in a vice.

"One moment longer, mynheer, and you shall go. The horses of which I speak are harnessed to a sledge wherein is the jongejuffrouw, your sister."

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"Yes! *Verdommte Keerl!* Let me get to her or——"

"As soon as the fat philosopher has disposed of the Lord of Stoutenburg and of Jan, he, too, will jump into the sledge; and a minute later it will be speeding on its way to Haarlem."

"And there will be three of us left here to hang you to that same gallows on which you should have dangled an hour ago!" exclaimed Beresteyn savagely.

"Possibly," retorted Diogenes dryly. "But even so, your sister will be on the way to Haarlem rather than to exile, whither the Lord of Stoutenburg and you—her brother—would drag her."

"And what is it to you, you abominable *plepshurk*, whither I go with my sister and my friend?"

"Only this, mynheer—that yesterday in this very room I proclaimed myself a forger, a liar and a thief before the jongejuffrouw in order that her love for her only brother should not receive a mortal wound.

"At the moment I did not greatly care for that lie," he added with his wonted flippancy, "but time hath lent it enchantment; it is on the whole one of the finest lies I ever told in my life. Moreover, it carried conviction; the jongejuffrouw was deceived. Now I will not see that pet lie of mine made fruitless by the abominable action which you have in contemplation."

BERESTEYN made no immediate reply. Easily swayed, as he always was, by a character stronger than his own, the words spoken by the man whom he had always affected to despise could not fail to move him. He knew that that same abominable action of which he was being accused had indeed been contemplated not only by Stoutenburg but also by himself.

It had required only one word from Stoutenburg— "Gilda of course comes with us"—one hint that her presence in Holland would be a perpetual menace to his personal safety, and he had been not only willing but fully prepared to put this final outrage upon the woman whom he should have protected with his life.

Therefore now he dared not meet the eager, questioning glance of this adventurer, in whose merry eyes the look of irrepressible laughter was momentarily veiled by one of anxiety. He looked around him restlessly, shiftily; his wandering glance fell on the narrow inner door which stood open, and he caught a glimpse of a smaller room beyond, with a window at the farther end of it. That window had been broken in from without, the narrow frame torn out of its socket and the mullion wrenched out of its groove.

Through the wide breach thus made in the lath-and-mud walls of the hut, Beresteyn suddenly saw the horses and the sledge out there in the open. The fight of a while ago by the front door had now been transferred to this spot. A short, fat man with his back to the rear of the sledge was holding the Lord of Stoutenburg and Heemskerk at a couple of arms' lengths with the point of his sword. Jan was apparently not yet on the scene.

Another man, lean and tall, was on the box of the sledge, trying with all his might to hold in a pair of horses which, frightened with the clang of steel against steel, with the movement and the shouting, were threatening to plunge and rear at any moment.

Diogenes laughed aloud.

"My friend Pythagoras seems somewhat hard pressed," he said, "and those horses might complicate the situation at any moment. I must to them now, mynheer. Tell me then quickly which you mean to do—behave like an honest man, or like a cur?"

"What right have you to dictate to me?" said Beresteyn sullenly. "I have no account to give to you of mine own actions."

"None, I admit," rejoined the philosopher placidly; "but let me put the situation a little more clearly before you. On the one hand you must own that I could at this moment, with very little trouble and hardly any scruples, render you physically helpless first, then lock you up in this room, and go and join my friends outside.

"On the other hand you could leave this room sound in body and at heart an honest man, jump into the sledge beside your sister, and convey her yourself safely back to the home whence you—her own brother—should never have allowed her to be taken."

"I can not do it," retorted Beresteyn moodily. "I could not meet my father face to face after what has happened."

"Think you Gilda would tell him that his only son has played the part of traitor?"

"She loathes and despises me."

"She has a horror of that treacherous

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plot. But the plot has come to naught and she will consider that you are punished enough for it already, and feel happy that you are free from Stoutenburg's clutches."

"I can not leave Stoutenburg now, and she must go with him. She hates me for the outrage which was committed against her."

"She does not know your share in it," said Diogenes quickly. "Have I not told you that I lied admirably? She believes me to be the only culprit, and to have forged your name to hide mine own infamy."

A hot flush rose to Beresteyn's pale cheeks.

"I can not bear to profit by your generosity," he said dully.

"Pshaw, man!" rejoined the other, not without a tone of bitterness. "What matters what my reputation is in her sight? She despises me so utterly already that a few sins more or less can not lower me further in her sight."

"No, no! I can not do it," persisted Beresteyn.

"Go to your friends, man," he added fiercely. "The fat one is sorely pressed; the other can not cope with the horses much longer! Go to their aid, and kill me if you are so minded. Indeed, I no longer care, and in any case I could not survive all this shame."

"Die by all means when and where you list," said Diogenes placidly, "but 'tis your place first of all to take your sister now under your own protection, to keep her in the knowledge that, whatever sins you may have committed, you were at least true and loyal to herself.

"By Heaven, man! Hath she not suffered enough already—in her person, in her pride, above all in her affections? Your loyalty to her at this moment would be ample compensation for all that she hath suffered. Be an honest man, and take her to her home."

"How can I? I have no home; and she is a menace to us all——"

"I am a menace to you, you weak-hearted craven," cried Diogenes, whose mustache bristled with fury now; "for, by Heaven, I swear that you shall not leave this place with a whole skin save to do an honest man's act of reparation."

And as if to give greater emphasis to his words Diogenes gave the other man's arm a vigorous wrench, which caused Beresteyn to groan and curse with pain.

"I may have to hurt you worse than this presently," said the philosopher imperturbably, as he dragged Beresteyn—who by now felt dizzy and helpless—to the nearest chair and deposited him there. "Were you not her brother, I believe I should crack your obstinate skull; as it is—— I will leave you here to take counsel with reason and honesty until I have finally disposed of my Lord of Stoutenburg."

HE RAN quickly to the outer door, pushed the bolts home, gave the key an extra turn and then pulled it out of the lock and threw it out of the window. Beresteyn, somewhat stunned with emotion, a little faint with that vigorous wrench on his arm, and prostrate with the fatigue and excitement of the past two days, made no attempt to stop him.

No doubt Nicolaes realized that any such attempt would indeed be useless; there was so much vitality, so much strength in the man that his tall stature appeared to Nicolaes now of giant-like proportions, and his powers to savor of the supernatural.

He watched him with dull, tired eyes, as he finally went out of the room through the inner door; no doubt this, too, he locked behind him. Beresteyn did not know. He half lay, half sat in the chair like a log; the sound of the fight outside, of the shouts that greeted Diogenes' arrival, of the latter's merry laughter that went echoing through the mist, reached his dull perceptions only like a far-off dream.

But in his mind he saw it all; the walls of the hut were transparent before his mental vision. He saw now the unequal fight; a perfect swordsman against Stoutenburg's unreasoning attacks and Heemskerk's want of skill. Jan, too, would have joined them by now, but he was loutish and clumsy. The issue would have been a foregone conclusion even without the aid of the fat knave, who had already held his own for nearly ten minutes.

Yet, though his thoughts were not by any means all clear upon the subject, Beresteyn made no attempt to go to his own friends' assistance. Vaguely some pleasing visions began to float through space around him. It seemed as if the magic personality of a nameless adventurer still filled this narrow room with its vitality, with its joy

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and with its laughter. The optimistic breeziness which emanated from the man himself had lingered after he was gone. His cheerful words still hung and reverberated upon the cold, wintry air.

"After all, why not?" mused Beresteyn.

Gilda knew of his share in the conspiracy against the Stadtholder, of course. But that conspiracy was now aborted; Gilda would never betray her brother's share in it either to the Stadtholder's vengeance or to her father's wrath.

And she had been made to believe that he was not the mover in the outrage against her person.

"Then—why not?"

She had been forcibly dragged out of this hut; she knew that Stoutenburg meant to take her away with him into exile; even if she had been only partially conscious since she was taken to the sledge, she would know that a desperate fight had been going on around her. Then if he, Nicolaes, now appeared upon the scene—if he took charge of her and of the sledge, and with the help of one or other of those knaves outside sped away with her north to Haarlem, would she not be confirmed in her belief in his loyalty? Would he not play a heroic rôle, make her happy and himself free?

"Then—why not?"

All the papers relating to the aborted conspiracy which might have compromised him he had upon his person even now. He and Heemskerk had themselves collected them in the weighing-room of the mill after Lucas of Sparendam had brought the terrible news.

"Then—why not?"

He rose briskly from his chair. The outer door of the hut was locked—he crossed to the inner door. That was just on the latch, and he threw it open. Before him now was the broken window frame, through which peeped the dull gray light of this misty Winter morning. Out in the open, through the filmy veil of the fog, he could see the final phases of an unequal fight.

Stoutenburg and Heemskerk were both disarmed and Jan had just appeared upon the scene. More far-seeing than were the Lord of Stoutenburg and Mynheer Heemskerk, he had very quickly realized that, sword in hand, no one was a match for this foreigner and his invincible blade.

When the fighting was transferred from the doorway of the hut to the open roadway in the rear, he had at first followed in the wake of his chief. Then he had doubled back, swiftly running to the mill; and in the basement, from the scattered litter of arms hastily thrown down, he had quickly picked up a couple of pistols, quietly loaded the weapons, and taking with him a supply of ammunition, he started to run back to the hut.

All this had taken some few minutes, while Pythagoras had borne the brunt of a vigorous attack from the Lord of Stoutenburg and Mynheer Heemskerk, and while Diogenes parleyed with Beresteyn inside the hut.

Beresteyn saw the whole picture before him. He had thrown open the door, and looked through the broken window at the precise moment when the Lord of Stoutenburg's sword flew out of his hand.

Then it was that Jan came running along, shouting to my lord. Stoutenburg turned quickly, saw his faithful lieutenant and caught sight of the pistols which Jan held.

The next second he had snatched one out of Jan's hand, and the pale ray of a wintry sun penetrating through the mist found its reflection in a couple of steel barrels pointed straight at a laughing philosopher.

Beresteyn from within felt indeed as if his heart stood still for that one brief, palpitating second. Was Fate after all taking the decision for the future—Gilda's and his—out of his hands into her own? Would a bullet end that vigorous life, still that merry laugh and that biting tongue forever, and leave Nicolaes to be swayed once more by the dark schemes and arbitrary will of his friend Stoutenburg?

FATE was ready, calmly spinning the threads of human destinies. But there are some men in the world who have the power and the skill to take their destinies in their own hands. The philosopher and weaver of dreams, the merry Laughing Cavalier, was one of these.

What the Lord of Stoutenburg had seen Diogenes also perceived as quickly; he, too, had caught sight of Jan, and of the two steel barrels simultaneously leveled at him; he, too, realized that the most skilled swordsman is but a sorry match against a pair of bullets.

But while Beresteyn held his breath and Stoutenburg tried to steady the trembling of his hand, he raised Bucephalus above his

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head and with a wild shout pointed toward the southern horizon far away.

"The Stadtholder's guard!" he cried lustily. "They are on us! *Sauve qui peut!*"

Three cries of mad terror rent the air; there was a double detonation, a great deal of smoke. The horses attached to the sledge reared and plunged wildly, forcing those who were nearest to the vehicle to beat a precipitate retreat.

"At the horses' heads, you wooden-headed bladder!" shouted Diogenes lustily.

Pythagoras did his best to obey, while Socrates was nearly dragged off the box by the frightened horses. Heemskerk had already incontinently taken to his heels. Jan had dropped his weapon, which Diogenes at once picked up. The Lord of Stoutenburg had reloaded and was preparing to fire again.

"*Sauve qui peut*, my lord!" cried Diogenes. "Before I change my mind and put a hole through your heel, which will prevent your running away fast enough to escape the Stadtholder's wrath."

There was another detonation. The horses reared and plunged again. When Beresteyn once more obtained a clear view of the picture, he saw the Lord of Stoutenburg stretched out on his back upon the ground in a position that was anything but dignified and certainly very perilous, for Diogenes, towering above him, was holding him by both feet.

The tall, soldierly figure of the foreigner stood out clearly silhouetted against the gray, misty light; his head, with its wealth of unruly brown curls, was thrown back with a gesture that almost suggested boyish delight in some impish mischief, while his infectious laugh echoed and reëchoed against the walls of the mill and of the hut.

Jan was on his hands and knees crawling toward those two men—the conqueror and the conquered—with no doubt a vague idea that he might even now render assistance to my lord.

"Here, Pythagoras, old fathead," cried Diogenes gaily. "See that our friend here does not interfere with me, and that he hath not a concealed poniard somewhere about his person. Then collect all pistols and swords that are lying about, well out of harm's way. In the meantime, what am I to do with his Magnificence? He is kicking like a vicious colt, and that shoulder of mine is beginning to sting like fury."

"Kill me, man, kill me!" cried Stoutenburg savagely. "Curse you, why don't you end this farce?"

"Because, my lord," said Diogenes, more seriously than was his wont, "the purest and most exquisite woman on God's earth did once deign to bestow the priceless jewel of her love upon you.

"Did she know of your present plight, she would even now be pleading for you; therefore," he added more flippantly, "I am going to give myself the satisfaction of making you a present of the last miserable shred of existence, which you will drag on from this hour forth in wretchedness and exile to the end of your days.

"Take your life and freedom, my lord," he continued in response to the invectives which Stoutenburg muttered savagely under his breath; "take them at the hands of the miserable *plepshurk* whom you so despise. It is better, methinks, to do this rather than fall into the hands of the Stadtholder, whose mercy for a fallen enemy would be equal to your own."

Then he shouted to Pythagoras.

"Here, old compeer! Search his Magnificence for concealed weapons, and then make ready to go. We have wasted too much time already."

Despite Stoutenburg's struggles and curses, Pythagoras obeyed his brother philosopher to the letter. His lordship and Jan were both effectually disarmed now. Then only did Diogenes allow Stoutenburg to struggle to his feet. He had his sword in his left hand and Pythagoras stood beside him. Jan found his master's hat and cloak and helped him on with them; then he said quietly:

"The minutes are precious, my lord. 'Tis a brief run to Ryswick; my Lord of Heemskerk has gone, and Mynheer Beresteyn has disappeared. Here we can do nothing more."

"Nothing, my good Jan," said Diogenes more seriously. "You are a brave soldier and a faithful servant. Take his Magnificence away to safety. You have well deserved your own."

Stoutenburg gave a last cry of rage and of despair. For a moment it seemed as if his blind fury would still conquer reason and prudence, and that he meant once more to make an attack upon his victorious enemy; but something in the latter's look of almost insolent triumph recalled him to the peril of his own situation. He passed

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his hand once or twice over his brow, like a man who is dazed and only just returning to consciousness; then he called loudly to Jan to follow him, and walked rapidly away northward through the fog.

Beresteyn went up to the broken window and watched him till he was out of sight; then he looked on Diogenes.

THE philosopher also watched the retreating figure of the Lord of Stoutenburg until the fog had swallowed it up; then he turned to his friend.

"Pythagoras, old compeer," he said with a shrug of his broad shoulders, "what would you take to be walking at this moment in that man's shoes?"

"I wouldn't do it, friend," rejoined Pythagoras placidly, "for the possession of a running river of home-brewed ale. And I am mightily dry at the present moment."

"Jump up, then, on the box beside Socrates, you old wine-tub, and get to Leyden as quickly as these horses will take you. A halt at Voorburg will refresh you all."

"But you?" queried Socrates from his post of vantage.

"I shall make my way to Ryswick first and get a horse there. I shall follow you at a distance, and probably overtake you before you get to Leyden. But you will not see me after this — unless there is trouble, which is not likely."

"But the jongejuffrouw?" persisted Socrates.

"Hush! I shall never really lose sight of you and the sledge. But you must serve her as best you can. Some one will be with her who will know how to take care of her."

"Who?"

"Her own brother, of course—Mynheer Beresteyn.

"Over the sill, mynheer!" he now shouted, calling to Nicolaes, who still stood undecided, shamed, hesitating in the broken framework of the window. "Over the sill; 'tis only three feet from the ground, and horses and men are quite ready for you."

He gave a lusty cheer of satisfaction as Beresteyn, throwing all hesitations to the winds, suddenly made up his mind to take the one wise and prudent course. He swung himself through the window, and in a few moments was standing by Diogenes' side.

"Let me at least tell you, sir——" he began earnestly.

"Hush! Tell me nothing now," broke in the other man quickly. "The jongejuffrouw might hear."

"But I must thank you——"

"If you say another word," said Diogenes, sinking his voice to a whisper, "I'll order Socrates to drive on and leave you standing here."

"But——"

"Into the sledge, man, in Heaven's name! The jongejuffrouw is unconscious, her woman daft with fear. When the lady regains consciousness let her brother's face be the first sight to comfort her.

"Into the sledge, man," he added impatiently, "or, by Heaven, I'll give the order to start!"

And without more ado, he hustled Nicolaes into the sledge. The latter, bewildered, really not clear with himself as to what he ought to do, peeped tentatively beneath the cover of the vehicle. He saw his sister lying there prone upon the wooden floor of the sleigh, her head resting against a bundle of rugs hastily put together for her comfort. The girl's old servant Maria was squatting beside her, her head and ears muffled in a cloak, her hands up to her eyes; she was moaning incoherently to herself.

Gilda's eyes were closed, and her face looked very pale; Beresteyn's heart ached at the pitiful sight. She looked so wan and so forlorn that a sharp pang of remorse for all his cruelty to her shot right through his dormant sensibilities.

There was just room for him under the low cover of the sledge. He hesitated no longer now; he felt, indeed, as if nothing would tear him away from Gilda's side until she was safely home again in their father's arms.

A peremptory order, "*En avant!*" struck upon his ear—a shout from the driver to his horses. The harness rattled, the sleigh creaked upon its framework and then slowly began to move. Beresteyn lifted the flap of the hood at the rear of the vehicle and looked out for the last time upon the mill and the hut, where such a tragic act in his life's drama had just been played out.

Nicolaes saw Diogenes still standing there, waving his hat in farewell. For a few moments longer his splendid figure stood out clearly against the flat gray landscape beyond; then slowly the veil of mist began to envelop him, at first only blurring

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the outline of his mantle or his sash. Then it grew more dense and the sledge moved away more rapidly.

The next moment the Laughing Cavalier had disappeared from view.

## CHAPTER XLII

### LEYDEN ONCE MORE

AFTER that Gilda had lived as in a dream, only vaguely conscious that good horses and a smoothly gliding vehicle were conveying her back to her home. Of this fact she was sure because Nicolaes was sitting quite close under the hood of the sledge, and when first she became fully aware of the reality of his presence, he had raised her hand to his lips and had said, in response to a mute appeal from her eyes—

"We are going home."

After that a quiet sense of utter weariness pervaded her being, and she fell into a troubled sleep. She did not heed what went on around her; she knew only that once or twice during the day there was a halt for food and drink.

The nearness of her brother, his gentleness toward her, gave her a sense of well-being, even though her heart felt heavy with a great sorrow which made the whole future appear before her like an interminable vista of blank and gray dulness.

It was at her suggestion that arrangements were made for an all-night halt at Leyden, which city they reached in the early part of the afternoon. She begged Nicolaes to put up at the hostelry of "The White Goat" on the farther side of the town, and thence to send a messenger to her father, asking him to come and meet her there on the morrow.

Though Nicolaes was not a little astonished at this suggestion of Gilda's—seeing that surely she must be longing to be home again, and that Haarlem could easily have been reached before night—he did not wish to run counter to her will. True enough, he dreaded the meeting with his father, but he knew that it had to come; and he felt that whatever might be the future consequence of it all, he could not possibly bear alone the burden of remorse and of shame which assailed him every time he encountered Gilda's tear-stained eyes and saw how wearied and listless she looked.

So he called a halt at "The White Goat," and as soon as he saw his sister safely installed, with everything ordered for her comfort, and a tasteful supper prepared, he sent a messenger on horseback at once to Haarlem to his father.

Gilda had deliberately chosen to spend the night at the hostelry of "The White Goat" because she felt that in that quaint old building with its wide oak staircase, over which she had been carried five days ago, dizzy and half fainting, the blackened rafters would mayhap still echo with the sound of a merry laughter which she would never hear again.

But when the sledge finally turned in under the low gateway and drew up in the small courtyard of the inn; when with wearied feet and shaking knees she walked up those oaken stairs, it seemed to her that the vivid memories which the whole place recalled were far harder to bear than those more intangible ones which, waking and sleeping, had tortured her up to now.

The bedroom, too, with the smaller one leading out of it, was the same as that in which she had slept. As the obsequious waiting-wench threw open the door for the noble jongejuffrouw to pass through, she saw before her the wide, open hearth with its crackling fire, the high-backed chair wherein she had sat, the very footstool which he had put to her feet.

It seemed to her at first as if she could not enter, as if his splendid figure would suddenly emerge out of the semi-darkness to confront her with his mocking eyes and his smiling face. She seemed to see him everywhere, and she had to close her eyes to chase away that all-too-insistent vision.

The waiting-wench did not help matters, either, for she asked persistently and shyly about the handsome mynheer who had such an irresistible fund of laughter in him. Maria, too, in her mutterings and grumblings contrived—most unwittingly, since she adored Gilda—to inflict a series of tiny pin-pricks on an already suffering heart.

TIRED in body and in mind, Gilda could not sleep that night. She was living over again every second of the past five days: the interview with that strangely winning person—a stranger still to her then—here in this room. How she had hated him at first! How she had tried to shame and wound him with her words,

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trying all the while to steel her heart against that irresistible gaiety and good-humor which shone from him like a radiance! Then that second interview in Rotterdam —did she still hate him then? And if not, when was hatred first changed into the love which now so completely filled her soul?

Looking back on those days, she could not tell. All that she knew was that when he was brought before her helpless and pinioned, she already loved him, and that since that moment love had grown and strengthened until her whole heart was given to that same nameless soldier of fortune whom she had first despised.

To live over again those few brief days which seemed now like an eternity was a sweet, sad pleasure which Gilda could endure; but what became intolerable in the darkness and in the silence of the night was the remembrance of the immediate past.

Clearly cut out before her mental vision were the pictures of her life this morning in the hut beside the mill; and indeed it was a lifetime that had gone by in those few hours.

First Stoutenburg's visit in the early morning, his smooth words and careless chatter—and she—poor fool!—under the belief all the time that the treacherous plot had been abandoned, and that she would forthwith be conveyed back to her father. Her thoughts of pleading for the condemned man's life—then the tramping of feet, the cries of terror, the appearance of her brother bringing the awful news of betrayal. She lived over again those moments of supreme horror when she realized how Stoutenburg had deceived her, and that Nicolaes himself was but a traitor and a miserable liar.

She knew then that it was the adventurer, the penniless soldier of fortune whom she had tried to hate and to despise, who had quietly gone to warn the Stadtholder, and that his action had been the direct working of God's will in a brave and loyal soul; she knew also, by a mysterious intuition which no good woman has ever been able to resist, that the man who had stood before her, self-convicted and self-confessed, had accepted that humiliation to save her the pain of fearing and despising her own brother.

The visions now became more dim and blurred. She remembered Stoutenburg's fury, his hideous threats of vengeance on the man who had thrown himself across his treacherous path. She remembered pleading to that monster, weeping, clinging to his arm in a passionate appeal. She remembered the soul-agony which she felt when she realized that that appeal had been in vain.

Then she had stood for a moment, silent and alone in the hut. Stoutenburg had left her in order to accomplish that hideous act of revenge.

After that she remembered clearly nothing more that had happened at the mill. She could have been only half conscious. All around her there was a confusion of sounds, of shouts and clash of arms; she thought that she was being lifted out of the chair into which she had fallen in a partial swoon; that she heard Maria's cries of terror, and that she felt the cold, damp morning air striking upon her face.

Presently she knew that Nicolaes was beside her, and that she was being taken home. All else was a blank or a dream.

Now she was tossing restlessly upon the lavender-scented bed in this hostelry, so full of memories. Her temples were throbbing, her eyes felt like pieces of glowing charcoal in her head. The blackness around her weighed upon her soul until she felt that she could not breathe.

Outside the silence of the night was being gravely disturbed; there were the sound of horses' hoofs upon the cobblestones of the yard, the creaking of a vehicle brought to a standstill, the usual shouts for grooms and hostlers. A late arrival had filled the tranquil inn with its bustle and its noise.

Then once again all was still, and Gilda turned her aching head upon the pillow. Though the room was not hot, and the atmosphere outside was heavy with frost, she felt positively stifled.

After a while this feeling of oppression became intolerable. She arose, and in the darkness groped for her fur-lined cloak, which she wrapped closely around her. Then she found her way across to the window and drew aside the curtain.

No light penetrated through the latticed panes; the waning moon, which four nights ago had been at times so marvelously brilliant, had not yet risen above the horizon-line. As Gilda's fingers fumbled for the window latch she heard a distant church clock strike the midnight hour.

She threw open the casement. The sill was low and she leaned out, peering up and down the narrow street. It was entirely

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deserted and pitch dark, save where on the wall opposite the light from a window immediately below her threw its feeble reflection. Vaguely she wondered who was astir in the small hostelry. No doubt it was the taproom which was there below her, still lighted up, and apparently with its small casement also thrown open, like the one out of which she was leaning.

FOR now, when the echo of the chiming clock had entirely died away, she was conscious of a vague murmur of voices coming up from below, confused at first and undistinguishable; but presently she heard a little click as if the casement had been pushed farther open, or mayhap a curtain pulled aside; for after that the voices became more distinct.

With beating heart and straining ears Gilda leaned as far out of the window as she could, listening intently; she had recognized her father's voice, and he was speaking so strangely that even as she listened she felt all the blood tingling in her veins.

"My son, sir," he was saying, "had, I am glad to say, sufficient pride and manhood in him not to bear the full weight of your generosity any longer. He sent a special messenger on horseback out to me this afternoon.

"As soon as I knew that my daughter was here I came as fast as a sleigh and the three best horses in my stables could bring me. I had no thought, of course, of seeing you here."

"I had no thought that you should see me, sir," said a voice which by its vibrating tones had the power of sending the hot blood rushing to the listener's neck and cheeks. "Had I not entered the yard just as your sledge turned in under the gateway, you had not been offended by mine unworthy presence."

"I would in that case have searched the length and breadth of this land to find you, sir," rejoined Cornelius Beresteyn earnestly, "for half an hour later my son had told me the whole circumstances of his association with you."

"An association of which Mynheer Nicolaes will never be over-proud, I'll warrant," came in slightly less flippant accents than usual, from the foreigner. "Do I not stand self-confessed as a liar, a forger and abductor of helpless women? A fine record, forsooth; and ere he ordered me to be hanged, my Lord of Stoutenburg did loudly proclaim me as such before his friends and before his followers."

"His friends, sir, are the sons of my friends. I will loudly proclaim you what you truly are—a brave man, a loyal soldier, a noble gentleman! Nicolaes has told me every phase of his association with you, from his shameful proposal to you in regard to his own sister, down to this moment when you still desired that Gilda and I should remain in ignorance of his guilt."

"What is the good, mynheer, of raking up all this past?" said the philosopher lightly. "I would that Mynheer Nicolaes had known how to hold his tongue."

"Thank Heaven that he did not!" retorted Cornelius Beresteyn hotly. "Had he done so, I stood in peril of failing—for the first time in my life—in an important business obligation."

"Not toward me, mynheer, at any rate."

"Yes, sir, toward you," affirmed Beresteyn decisively. "I promised you five hundred thousand guilders if you brought my daughter safely back to me. I know from mine own son, sir, that I owe her safety to no one but to you."

"Ours was an ignoble bargain, mynheer," said Diogenes with his wonted gaiety, and though she could not see him Gilda could picture his face, now alive with merriment and suppressed laughter.

"The humor of the situation appealed to me—it proved irresistible; but the bargain in no way binds you, seeing that it was I who had been impious enough to lay hands upon your daughter."

"At my son's suggestion, I know," rejoined Beresteyn quietly; "and from your subsequent acts, sir, I must infer that you did it only because you felt that she was safer under your charge than at the mercy of her own brother and his friends.

"Nay! Do not protest," he added earnestly. "Nicolaes, as you see, is of the same opinion."

"May Heaven reward you, sir, for that kindly thought of me," said Diogenes more seriously. "It will cheer me in the future, when I and all my doings will have faded from your ken."

"You are not leaving Holland, sir?"

"Not just now, mynheer, while there is so much fighting to be done. The Stadtholder hath need of soldiers——"

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"And he will find, sir, none better than you throughout the world. And with a goodly fortune to help you——"

"Speak not of that, mynheer," he said firmly. "I could not take your money. If I did I should never know a happy hour again."

"Oh!"

"I am quite serious, sir, though indeed you might not think that I can ever be serious. For six days now I have had a paymaster; Mynheer Nicolaes' money has burned a hole in my good-humor, it has scorched my hands, wounded my shoulder and lacerated my hip; it has brought on me all the unpleasant sensations which I have so carefully avoided hitherto—remorse, humiliation and one or two other sensations which will never leave me until my death.

"It changed temporarily the shiftless, penniless soldier of fortune into a responsible human being, with obligations and duties. I had to order horses, bespeak lodgings, keep accounts. Ye gods! It made a slave of me!

"KEEP your money, sir; it is more fit for you to handle than for me. Let me go back to my shiftlessness, my penury, my freedom; eat my fill today, starve tomorrow, and one day look up at the stars from the lowly earth, with a kindly bullet in my chest that does not mean to blunder.

"And if in the days to come your thoughts ever do revert to me, I pray you think of me as happy, or nearly so, owning no master save my whim, bending my back to none, keeping my hat on my head when I choose, and ending my days in a ditch or in a palace, the carver of mine own destiny, the sole arbiter of my will.

"And now, I pray you, seek that rest of which you must be sorely in need. I start at daybreak tomorrow; mayhap we shall never meet again, save in heaven, if indeed there be room there for such a thriftless adventurer as I."

"But whither do you mean to go, sir?"

"To the Mountains of the Moon, sir," rejoined the philosopher lightly, "or along the Milky Way to the Land of the Might-Have-Been."

"Before we part, sir, may I shake you by the hand?"

There was silence down below after that. Gilda listened in vain; no further words reached her ears just then. She tiptoed as quietly as she could across the room, finding her way with difficulty in the dark. At last her fumbling fingers encountered the latch to the door of the inner room where Maria lay snoring lustily.

It took Gilda some little time to awaken the old woman, but at last she succeeded; and then she ordered her very peremptorily to strike a light.

"Are you ill, mejuffrouw?" queried Maria anxiously, even though she was but half awake.

"No," replied Gilda curtly, "but I want my dress. Quick, now!" she added, for Maria showed signs of desiring to protest.

The jongejuffrouw was in one of those former imperious moods of hers when she exacted implicit obedience from her servants. Alas! The last few days had seen that mood submerged in an ocean of sorrow and humiliation, and Maria—though angered at having been wakened out of a first sleep—was very glad to see her darling looking so alert and so brisk.

Indeed, the light being very dim, Maria could not see the brilliant glow that lit up the jongejuffrouw's cheeks as with somewhat febrile gestures she put on her dress and smoothed her hair.

"Now put on your dress too, Maria," she said when she was ready, "and tell my father, who is either in the taproom down below or hath already retired to his room, that I desire to speak with him."

And Maria, bewildered and flustered, had no option but to obey.

## CHAPTER XLIII

### BLAKE OF BLAKENEY

WHILE Maria completed a hasty toilet, Gilda's instinct had drawn her back once more to the open window. The light from the room below was still reflected on the opposite wall, and from the taproom the buzz of voices had not altogether ceased.

Cornelius Beresteyn was speaking now.

"Indeed," he said, "it will be the one consolation left to me, since you do reject my friendship, sir."

"Not your friendship, sir—only your money," interposed Diogenes.

"Well, you do speak of lifelong parting. But your two friends have indeed deserved well of me. Without their help, no doubt



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you, sir, first, and then my dearly loved daughter would have fallen victims to that infamous Stoutenburg. Will a present of twenty thousand guilders each gratify them, do you think?"

A ringing laugh roused the echoes of the sleeping hostelry.

"Twenty thousand guilders! Ye gods!" exclaimed Diogenes merrily. "Pythagoras, dost hear, old bladder-face? Socrates, my robin, dost realize it? Twenty thousand guilders each in your pockets, old compeers! Lord! How drunk you will both be to-morrow!"

Out of the confused hubbub that ensued Gilda could disentangle nothing definite; there was a good deal of shouting and clapping of pewter mugs against a table, and through it all that irresponsible, infectious laughter which—strangely enough—had to Gilda's ears at this moment a curious tone, almost of bitterness, as if its merriment were only forced.

Then, when the outburst of gaiety had somewhat subsided, she once more heard her father's voice. Maria was dressed by this time, and now at a word from Gilda was ready to go downstairs and deliver the jongejuffrouw's message to her father.

"You spoke so lightly just now, sir, of dying in a ditch or a palace," Cornelius Beresteyn was saying, "but you did tell me that day in Haarlem that you had kith and kindred in England. Where is that father of whom you spoke? And your mother who is a saint? Your irresponsible vagabondage will leave her in perpetual loneliness."

"My mother is dead, sir," said Diogenes quietly. "My father broke her heart."

"Even then he hath a right to know that his son is a brave and loyal gentleman."

"He will know that only when his son is dead."

"That is a cruel dictum, sir."

"Not so cruel as that which left my mother to starve in the streets of Haarlem."

"Aye! Ten thousand times more cruel; since your dear mother, sir, had not to bear the awful burden of lifelong remorse."

"Bah!" rejoined the philosopher with a careless shrug of the shoulders. "A man seldom feels remorse for wrongs committed against a woman."

"But he doth for those committed against his flesh and blood—his son——"

"I have no means of finding out, sir, if my father hath or hath not remorse for his wilful desertion of wife and child. England is a far-off country—I would not care to undertake so unprofitable a pilgrimage."

"Then why not let me do so, sir?" queried Cornelius Beresteyn calmly.

"You?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"Why should you trouble, mynheer, to seek out the father of such a vagabond as I?"

"Because I would like to give a man—an old man, your father must be now—the happiness of calling you his son. You say he lives in England. I often go to England on business. Will you not at least tell me your father's name?"

"I have no cause to conceal it, mynheer," rejoined Diogenes carelessly. "In England they call him Blake of Blakeney; his home is in Sussex, and I believe that it is a stately home."

"But I know the Squire of Blakeney well," said Cornelius Beresteyn eagerly; "my bankers at Amsterdam also do business for him. I know that just now he is in Antwerp on a mission from King James of England to the Archduchess. He hath oft told Mynheer Beuselaar, our mutual banker, that he was moving heaven and earth to find the son whom he had lost."

"Heaven and earth take a good deal of moving," quoth Diogenes lightly, "once a wife and son have been forsaken and left to starve in a foreign land. Mine English father wedded my mother in the church of St. Pieter at Haarlem. My friend Frans Hals—God bless him!—knew my mother and cared for me after she died. He has all the papers in his charge relating to the marriage.

"It has long ago been arranged between us that if I die with ordinary worthiness, he will seek out my father in England and tell him that mayhap, after all, even though I have been a vagabond all my life, I have never done anything that should cause him to blush for his son."

APPARENTLY at this juncture, Maria must have knocked at the door of the *tapperij;* for Gilda, whose heart was beating more furiously than ever, heard presently the well known, firm footsteps of her father as he rapidly ascended the stairs.

Two minutes later Gilda lay against her

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father's heart; and, her hand resting in his, she told him from beginning to end everything that she had suffered from the moment when, after watch-night service in the Groote Kerk, she first became aware of the murmur of voices, to that when she first realized that the man whom she should have hated, the knave whom she should have despised, filled her heart and soul to the exclusion of all other happiness in the world, and that he was about to pass out of her life for ever.

It took a long time to tell, for she had suffered more, felt more, lived more in the past five days than would fill an ordinary life; nor did she disguise anything from her father, not even the conversation which she had had at Rotterdam in the dead of night with the man who had remained nameless until now, and in consequence of which he had gone at once to warn the Stadtholder and had thus averted the hideous conspiracy which would have darkened forever the destinies of many Dutch homes.

Of Nicolaes she did not speak; she knew that he had confessed his guilt to his father, who would know how to forgive in the fulness of time.

When she had finished speaking her father said somewhat roughly:

"But for that *vervloekte* adventurer down there, you would never have suffered, Gilda, as you did. Nicolaes——"

"Nicolaes, father dear," she broke in quietly, "is very dear to us both. I think that his momentary weakness will endear him to us even more. But he was a tool in the hands of that unscrupulous Stoutenburg—and but for that nameless and penniless soldier whose hand you were proud to grasp just now, I would not be here in your arms at this moment."

"Ah!" said Cornelius Beresteyn dryly. "Is this the way that the wind blows, my girl? Do you not know, then, that the rascal, the day after he dared to lay hands upon you, was back again in Haarlem, bargaining with me to restore you to my arms in exchange for a fortune?"

"And two days later, father dear," she retorted, "he endured insults, injuries, cruelties from Stoutenburg rather than betray Nicolaes' guilt before me."

"Hm!" murmured Cornelius, and there was a humorous twinkle in his eyes as he looked down upon his daughter's bowed head.

"And but for that same rascal, father," she continued softly, "you would at this moment be mourning a dead daughter, and Holland a hideous act of treachery."

"Hush, my dear!" cried the old man impulsively, as he put his kind, protecting arms around the child whom he loved so dearly.

"I would never have followed the Lord of Stoutenburg while I lived," she said simply.

"Please Heaven," he said earnestly. "I would sooner have seen you in the crypt beside your mother!"

"Then, father, hath not the rascal you speak of deserved well of us? Can we not guess that even originally he took me away from Haarlem, only because he knew that if he refused the bargain proposed to him by mine own brother, Stoutenburg would have found some other means of insuring my silence?"

"You are a good advocate, my girl," rejoined Cornelius with a sly wink which brought the color rushing up to Gilda's cheeks. "I think, by your leave, I'll go and shake that *vervloekte Keerl* once more by the hand. And—shall I tell him that you bear him no ill will?" he added roguishly.

"Yes, father dear, tell him that," she said gently.

"Then will you go to bed, dear?" he asked. "You are overwrought and tired."

"I will sit by the window quietly for a quarter of an hour," she said. "After that I will promise you that I will go peaceably to bed."

He kissed her tenderly, for she was very dear to him; but being a man of vast understanding and profound knowledge of men and things, the humorous twinkle did not altogether fade from his eyes as he finally bade his daughter good night, and then quietly went out of the room.

## CHAPTER XLIV

### THE END

DIOGENES sat beside the window in the *tapperij*, listening with half an ear to the sounds in and about the hostelry that were dying out one by one. At first there had been a footfall in the room overhead which had seemed to him the sweetest music that man could hear. It had paced somewhat restlessly up and down, and to the Laughing Cavalier, the gay and irresponsible soldier

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of fortune, it had seemed as if every creaking of a loose board beneath the feather-weight of that footfall found its echo in his heart.

But anon Mynheer Cornelius Beresteyn was called away, and then all was still in the room upstairs; and Diogenes, burying his head in his hands, evoked the picture of that room as he had seen it five days ago. The proud jongejuffrouw in her high-backed chair, looking on him with wide blue eyes which she vainly tried to render hard through their exquisite expression of appealing, childlike gentleness; and he groaned aloud with the misery of the inevitable which with stern finger bade him go and leave behind him all the illusions, all the dreams which he had dared to weave.

Had she not told him that she despised him, that his existence was as naught to her, that she looked on him as a menial and a knave, somewhat below the faithful henchmen who were in her father's service? Ye gods! He had endured much in his life of privations, of physical and mental pain, but was there aught on earth or in the outermost pits of perdition to be compared with the agony of this ending to a dream?

The serving-wench came in just then.

Mynheer Cornelius Beresteyn, she said, desired to speak with him once more. But hearing the message he had jumped up with alacrity and was immediately ready to follow her.

Mynheer Berestyn had a room on the upper floor, she explained, as she led the way upstairs. The old man was standing on the narrow landing and as soon as Diogenes appeared upon the stairs, he said simply:

"There was something I did forget to say to you downstairs. May I trouble you, sir, to come into my room for a moment?"

He threw open one of the doors that gave on the landing and politely stood aside that his visitor might pass through.

Diogenes entered the room: he heard the door closed behind him, and thought that Mynheer Beresteyn had followed him in.

The room was very dimly lighted by a couple of tallow candles that flickered in their sconces, and at first he could not see into the dark recesses of the room. But presently something moved, something ethereal and intangible, white and exquisite. It stirred from out the depths of the huge, high-backed chair, and from out the gloom there came a little cry of surprise and of joy which was as the call of bird or angel.

He did not dare to move; he scarcely dared to breathe. He looked around for Mynheer Beresteyn, who had disappeared.

Surely this could be only a dream! Nothing real on earth could be so exquisite as that subtle vision which he had of her now, sitting in the high-backed chair, leaning slightly forward toward him. Gradually his eyes became accustomed to the gloom; he could see her quite distinctly now, her brown curls around her perfect head, her red lips parted, her eyes fixed upon him with a look which he dared not interpret.

All around him were the silence and the darkness of the night, and he was alone with her just as he had been in this very room five days ago, and then again at Rotterdam.

"St. Bavon, you rogue!" he murmured. "Where are you? How dare you leave me in the lurch like this?"

THEN—how it all happened he could not himself have told you—he suddenly found himself at her feet, kneeling beside the high-backed chair; his arms were around her shoulders, and he could feel the exquisite perfume of her breath upon his cheek.

"St. Bavon," he cried exultingly to himself, "go away, you rogue! There's no need for your admonitions now!"

Mynheer Beresteyn tiptoed quietly into the room. The roguish smile still played around his lips. He came up close to the high-backed chair and placed his hand upon his daughter's head.

Diogenes looked up, and met the kindly eyes of the old man fixed with calm earnestness upon him.

"Mynheer," he said, and laughter which contained a world of happiness as well as of joy danced and sparkled in every line of his face, "just now I refused one half of your fortune. But 'tis your greatest treasure I claim from you now!"

"Nay, you rascal," rejoined Beresteyn, as he lifted his daughter's chin gently with one finger and looked into her deep-blue eyes which were brimful of happiness. "Methinks that that treasure is yours already!"

"Go back, good St. Bavon!" cried the Laughing Cavalier in an ecstasy of joy. "Your heaven, you rogue, is not more perfect than this!"

THE END

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# The Luck of the Cards

## A Tale of the Northwest Mounted

by

**Ralph Delamere Keefer and Stephen Chalmers**

FORTY-MILE GRAINGER, of Little Bend Detachment, was in a grim humor. Not long before they had made him a corporal. When the billet arrived, he shrugged his shoulders and chuckled ironically.

"Some," quoth he, "are born great. Some achieve greatness. Others have greatness thrust upon them."

But he made a good corporal. The grim humor really came with a letter from the Officer Commanding, in which that large personage asked Corporal Grainger "if he was at all aware that for some time the illicit importation of intoxicating liquors had been going on in the Little Bend District?"

Grainger penned a reply to the effect that he knew it perfectly well, and probably better and in more detail than the O. C. himself, inasmuch as he (Corporal Grainger) had been on the trail of the smuggler for six weeks; also, that he had placed his man—one Foster, who owned a handy border ranch—but that he was not going to pounce on him until he had him right, not for any O. C. alive. Furthermore, he added, the Officer Commanding might, if he saw fit, return him to duty at the Post "with rank and pay of constable."

Then Forty-Mile tore up the letter and laughed.

"After all," said he, amusedly, "a man has no right to join the Force if he means to sass back at his superiors."

Nevertheless the incident rankled, and Corporal Grainger went on the warpath.

"Hammond," said he to me, "you'll hold the fort. McMillan—" to my fellow constable— "you'll make a search patrol among all the ranches along to the eastward. I'm going on a grand tour of investigation to the west. We've got to bring that fellow in or—" he chuckled—"I'll never rise to eminence as a corporal."

Two hours later Forty-Mile Grainger drew up his horse on top of a hillock. His scarlet tunic made a splash of vividness against the burnt umber and olive tints of the prairie beyond. With one gauntleted hand controlling the restless horse, he gazed down the slope where the Saskatchewan wound its sluggish course through the shallow valley before him.

As he watched, a speck appeared on the farther bank of the River. Diverging jets of silver spray marked its plunge across the ford. As it scrambled up the near side, Grainger loosened his reins and cantered down the long incline to meet it.

The approaching figure resolved itself into that of a mounted Indian, clad in a faded blue pea jacket and stained khaki



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trousers, with two looped pigtails falling to his shoulders from under the brim of a battered Stetson. The Indian pulled his pony to its haunches, slid to the ground and stalked forward with outstretched hand.

"*Meewassin*, Corp," he saluted gravely.

"*Meewassin*, Charlie," replied Forty-Mile Grainger, leaning over to give the Indian the single hand wag which frontier etiquette requires. "You got news, Charlie. You catch him Foster?"

The Indian shook his head till the plaited scalp locks flapped against his stained cheeks. "Him no have got," he announced with conviction. "That Foster him fool. *Matchabs!* Savvy?"

"Nothing doing, eh?" said Grainger. "Can't get it on him?"

"*Sa-a-al*" with all the withering scorn of the Blackfoot negative. "Him talk too much; that's all. *Spotsaqui!*"

*Spotsaqui* is final; possibly the most final word in any language. And Grainger knew what Charlie meant about "talking too much." That, so far, was the only evidence against Foster as the whisky smuggler. He had laid himself open to suspicion by various unwise remarks when requested to settle a long-standing account with the Hudson Bay Stores at Little Bend.

Grainger stared at the Indian. It had been his boast that Charlie Nisto-wa-sis was one of the best scouts on the special-constables' roll. Grainger was not convinced of Foster's innocence, and his belief in the Indian's intuitive perspicacity died hard.

"Well," said the corporal finally, "you'd better get back to the Detachment, *h'nee takit*, and round up those Lazy B horses in corral. Inspector Hawkins is coming for them in the morning. *Mistapoot!*"

The scout departed with a spectacular clatter of hoofs. Forty-Mile Grainger resumed his patrol.

CONSTABLE McMILLAN, in the meantime, had been equally unsuccessful to the east of Little Bend. His only satisfaction had been the pleasure derived from eight miles of hard riding and the indignant remonstrances of two Mormon families, whose quarters he had invaded and searched.

It was with a sigh of relief that Constable McMillan found himself, late in the afternoon, in the neighborhood of Old Sandy Campbell's ranch. He turned his horse in that direction.

Aside from the fact that Constable McMillan and the old rancher were both Scots, Alexander Campbell had ever been a friend of the police. They were "his laddies," as he termed them, and McMillan and his mates of the Little Bend Detachment had formed the habit of staying overnight at hospitable old "Uncle Sandy's" house, whenever necessity took them that way.

The sun was just sinking as McMillan rode in through the open gate and dismounted. Slipping off the bridle, he allowed his thirsty animal to drink at the watering-trough. Then, leading it to the stable, he uncinched his saddle, dumped it in the harness-room, tied up the horse in the stall, and with a wisp of hay began to rub down its wet flanks.

This operation was barely commenced when there burst upon McMillan's ears a crescendo of frightened squawks. A much disheveled chicken careered into the stable at full speed. Close behind it appeared a young person in a fluttering blue cotton dress, stooping down with bare arms outstretched in a vain effort to capture the fowl. At the door the girl abandoned the chase and straightened up with a gesture of despair.

"Oh, come here, you wretched little beast!" she wailed pétulantly.

"Allow me to help you," said McMillan. He was surprised to find any sort of girl at the Campbell ranch. But a girl like this! She was a beauty.

The young woman gasped as her eyes discovered the straight, soldierly figure of Constable McMillan. McMillan observed that, although her face was freckled, it was decidedly piquant, under a mop of shining red hair, which was piled loosely on top of her head.

"Hullo!" said she quite frankly. "I wish you *would* help me. That miserable little chicken——"

McMillan looked down and discovered the quarry cowering behind a post at his feet. With a rapid movement he swooped on it, only to grab a handful of tail feathers as it scuttled back into the extended arms of the young person in blue, who promptly clasped it to her bosom.

"Here!" she commanded. "Come and take it—quick! It's so—so wriggly!"

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McMillan relieved the girl of the wriggler.

"Now wring its neck—please," said the young woman, patting her hair into a semblance of order.

McMillan obediently seized the chicken by the neck.

"*Wait* a minute!" she shrieked. "Don't do it yet—silly!"

Pressing her face against a post, she shut both eyes tight and stuck a pink finger tip into each ear. Then:

"All right. You can—do it now."

As Constable McMillan faithfully swung the chicken around in the air, he could not help thinking how pleasant it was to be called "silly" by a young goddess with Titian hair and blue eyes, blue as the sky or her own cotton dress. It was a very pleasant incident.

Presently he proffered the limp sacrifice.

"Thanks awf'ly," she said, taking the chicken gingerly, but bestowing a grateful smile upon the executioner. "It's for supper, you know, and I'd never have *dared* do it myself."

Then, turning abruptly, she fled toward the house with the chicken dangling in her hand.

After feeding his horse, Constable McMillan, filled with vague thoughts, went over to the house, where he encountered old Sandy Campbell, an elderly Scot of bushy aspect and energetic manners.

"Hel-lo, McMillan!" he roared. "Where'd you spring from? Have na seen ye since the Lord knows when. Glad to see you, laddie, glad to see you. Come awa' in and tell us all about everything."

Constable McMillan presently dropped into a roomy chair beside a stone fireplace, while the old gentleman produced a bottle of whisky, which he placed beside his guest.

"Smuggled?" said McMillan.

"It could taste no better if it were," said Sandy Campbell dryly.

He turned his back on the constable and dropped into the old-country dialect, as two Scotsmen ever will when they meet.

"We'll hae a dram, lad. Noo, whaur the deevil's that corkscrew? Can na lay a han' on a thing sin' Lu cam' hame. Hey, Mac, ye haena seen my lassie, Lu, yet. A grand lass, I'm tellin' ye. Just oot o' ane o' thae convent schules at Montreal. Taks aifter her auld dad, Lu does. No that I was ever in a convent, but——"

His voice died away in the hall, then burst forth in a roar.

"Lu!" he bellowed. "Lu, ma lass! Luella!"

"Coming, dad!" came a clear voice from the kitchen.

Old Sandy Campbell presently reëntered the room with his arm proudly around the waist of the blue-cottoned young lady of the chicken incident.

"Here she is, Mac!" he thundered triumphantly. "Here's the boss o' the ranch. My daughter Luella—Meester McMillan, of the Royal Northwest Mounted *Po*lis. Meester McMillan's going to stay overnight, Lu, so set an extra place for supper and make up the bed in the end room. Not a word, young man!" he added fiercely, as McMillan murmured a feeble protest.

"Yes, dad," said Luella, and made to retire. At the door she turned twinkling eyes upon the constable, and added, "It will be chicken for supper, *Meester* McMillan!"

Sandy Campbell's jaw dropped at this uncalled-for announcement, but Constable McMillan lay back in his chair and roared with mirth.

"It's no laughin' maitter," quoth Sandy solemnly. "Women are queer critters."

NEXT day Constable McMillan returned to the Detachment. He was very absent-minded, it seemed to me. When Grainger returned, McMillan reported that he had searched every ranch house, except Uncle Sandy's, without result. Forty-Mile had no better report to enter for himself.

"But we've got to get that scamp!" said the corporal. "In the meantime—supper. Then who says a game of poker for matches?"

After supper the three of us cleared the table and sat down to a game of poker. In less than an hour Forty-Mile had cleaned out both McMillan and myself. He grinned at us over a pile of sulfur-tipped timber.

"I'm unlucky at cards," said McMillan with a laugh. "Always was."

"Then you should be lucky in love," said Grainger with a sudden strange gravity.

"If there's anything in that, then you can rest assured, Forty-Mile, you'll die a bachelor," said McMillan lightly.

I noticed that the gravity on Grainger's face deepened into a frown almost.

"Let's turn in," he said gruffly, shoving the matches impatiently to the middle of the table.

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For a week the search for the smuggler, or such evidence as would lay the offense at Foster's door, continued. And during that week stern duty drew McMillan quite often in the direction of the Campbell ranch. Never was devotion to duty so marked as in the case of Reg. No. 2016, Constable McMillan. Incidentally, one night he held Luella Campbell's hand for five seconds and lost his nerve in the sixth.

That was the night he told me about his trouble. He was in love, I assured him. He agreed with me. I advised him to remember that he was not drawing much money from her Majesty's Government and he had to think of the girl. Old Campbell was well to do; and that was just what stuck in McMillan's gorge. He decided to avoid temptation, and next day he went over to tell Luella he was never going to see her again. I laughed for five minutes after he got started toward the magnetic pole.

He found her leaning against the gate. She smiled as he came. Promptly his resolves melted like snow before the Chinook.

"I was on my way to the Blood Reserve," said he lamely, "when I thought I saw fire over here and I——"

"Oh, my poor hair!" cried Luella.

"Your hair——" began McMillan, who saw an opening. But again his nerve deserted him. He wasn't drawing much money from her Majesty's Government.

Anyway, old Campbell hailed him from the veranda with a roar, and again Constable McMillan was booked for supper and overnight.

"Got that whisky smuggler yet?" asked the old man.

"No, but we're not losing a minute on his trail," said McMillan; and he wondered why the old man chuckled.

After supper Mr. Campbell betook himself to his comfortable armchair, while Luella and the constable went for a stroll in the moonlight.

They wandered from the house and leaned side by side on the bars of the pasture gate. Far off across the prairie a coyote howled mournfully at the moon. Innumerable insects hummed and chirped in the dew-laden grass, while a warm night breeze fanned strayed tendrils of her hair against his cheek.

Presently old Sandy Campbell opened his eyes from his after-supper snooze and sat up, bending his head to listen. Luella was singing—somewhere out there in the moonlight—one of the songs of his ain dear land:

"An' for bonnie Annie Laurie
I wad lay me doon an' dee!"

When the singer by the pasture gate finished her song and lowered her eyes from the big moon, she discovered that Constable McMillan's arm was lying gently around her waist.

"Silly!" she murmured, but did not withdraw herself.

And only the night before, at the Detachment, McMillan had held a full house and Forty-Mile Grainger had bluffed him out with a pair of two spots.

GIVING up the idea of sleep as too grossly material for the state of his feelings, Constable McMillan was up at sunrise. The night before, he had informed Mr. Campbell of the state of affairs between Luella and himself. The old Scot had shown no signs of disapproval; in fact, quite the reverse.

"Why, you young dog!" he shouted, slapping McMillan's broad back. "D'ye think I did na ken what ye were after? Whisky smugglers? Hoot! Anyway, if it suits Lu, it suits yer Uncle Sandy. Let's hae a dram for luck!

"What's that?" he snorted, as McMillan began some tale about a constable's salary not being enough to keep a gopher in nuts. "Blame it all, don't I know that? Now you'll do as I tell you. Get to headquarters as fast as you can and buy your discharge. Leave the rest to me. Not a word, sirrr! This is a beez'ness proposition. You want Luella. I want a manager for this ranch. Mutual benefit. Beez'ness!"

The frosty morning air seemed full of the exhilaration of Spring as, with jingling spurs, McMillan strode to the stable. Whistling gaily, he led his horse to the trough. Then he sent her back into the stall with a slap on the flank and went to get an armful of hay. There was usually a bundle of it in the end stall, ready for use, but it had all been consumed the night before, so Constable McMillan went out to forage for himself.

The hay corral, he knew, must be somewhere in the vicinity, and a large, low building at the rear, evidently a disused stable, claimed his attention. After some difficulty in forcing the latch, he swung back

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one of the big double doors and peered into the gloomy interior with a grunt of satisfaction. Great square bales of hay were piled up on all three sides, more than half filling the building, while the upper layer topped McMillan's six feet by two full hands.

He reached up the hay hook, slipped it under the wire and gave a powerful jerk, jumping backward out of the way of the fall. The bale tottered on the edge for a moment, then overbalanced and came to the ground with a heavy, splintering crash!

Before Constable McMillan's eyes the bale crumpled up into a litter of shattered débris, broken bottles and fragments of wood strewing the floor in all directions. The overpowering smell of spilled alcohol was not needed to convince McMillan's startled senses that here, where he least expected and least desired it, lay the evidence for which he and Forty-Mile Grainger had hunted so long!

For a minute he was too stunned by the discovery to realize to the full its disastrous meaning. Indeed, he felt nothing more than a sort of elation as he probed among the remaining bales, to find that, with the exception of three or four near the door, they all contained similar wooden cases filled with bottles of liquor.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed, looking about the place. "What a scheme! Who'd ever suspect it?"

Then, in a flash, the real import of his discovery came over him. He gave a gasp of dismay. Why, this was Campbell's—Uncle Sandy's corral, and all this concealed liquor! No wonder they were unable to find any trace of the daring whisky-runner, when it was Alexander Campbell himself—her father! That one fact stood out ugly and uncompromising amid the chaos of his thoughts.

Luella's father and his friend—a whisky smuggler!

So much was clear; and, as McMillan thought it over, the more inexorably clear became his duty. There could be no evasion of that; it was all so simple. The law demanded the arrest of Alexander Campbell and the law claimed McMillan, by virtue of his oath of allegiance, as the instrument.

"By gad, I won't!" the constable muttered, though the resolution brought little comfort. It was a difficult matter to force down in one minute the ingrained discipline of years, even though his whole being arose to support his inclination. The dominant fact could not be ignored. He was bound by the traditions of the Force, by his honor and his duty, to make the arrest. Otherwise he proved himself a broken reed, an invertebrate thing, unworthy his manhood and his uniform.

He paced feverishly up and down the hay-bedded floor, cursing the blind chance that had dealt him such a raw hand and seeking to temporize with his conscience, while from the floor the shattered fragments of glass winked up at him in glittering mockery.

At least he could spare himself the actual arrest, he thought; he could return to the Detachment and get somebody else to serve the warrant. The worst of it all was that Luella would know, and ——

A SHADOW fell across the doorway. McMillan looked up to find Luella herself standing in the entrance to the barn.

"Good morning!" she cried gaily. "I came to see if you wanted any breakfast——"

Her glance suddenly took in the broken cases and she stopped short.

"Why—why——" she stammered. "What is this? What does this mean?"

"It means that your father is a whisky smuggler," McMillan blurted out harshly, stung to brutality by the pain that was racking him. "It means that he has contraband liquor concealed in his hay corral—and I was a fool to believe——"

He choked back the bitter words at sight of her white face and widely opened eyes.

"B-but I don't understand," the girl whispered. "I-is it—very bad?"

"So bad as to mean his arrest and probable imprisonment," said McMillan grimly, "if I do my duty. And Heaven knows I—— Oh, curse my duty!"

The half comprehended fact of her father's guilt was swept aside by sudden anxiety for her father's safety.

"Oh, you'd never do that!" she gasped. "Not my father! Why, he'd never forgive——"

"I will have to do my duty," muttered McMillan stubbornly.

"Meaning that you—you will arrest him?"

"It is my duty."

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"Your duty!" she flashed scornfully. "And what about your duty to your friend? And—and I thought you cared for me. Y-you said you did." A little sob escaped her.

"Luella!" he pleaded.

"Don't touch me!" she cried tempestuously. "If you think more of your duty than you do of me, then go and do it. I hope I may never see you again!"

"But Luella, don't you understand?"

"I understand that if you cared for me, you'd do what I want. Besides, I know that my father couldn't have done this thing."

"That's for the law to decide," said he wearily.

She turned and faced him with wet-eyed indignation.

"Very well. Go," she said, almost echoing the monotone of his voice. "Please go—at once."

Without returning to the ranch house, Constable McMillan saddled his horse and started along the dusty trail toward Little Bend Detachment.

I SAW him coming and perceived that something was wrong. He was riding with head bowed and the horse was guiding itself. Grainger was seated at his desk writing when McMillan came in, dragging his feet like a man who is either exhausted or in the lees of drunkenness.

Forty-Mile Grainger looked up as McMillan came to a halt by the table. He, also, saw that an ill wind blew and looked down at his papers, so as to allow McMillan his own time.

For a full minute the constable stared through the window at the distant Kootenays, where they reared their jagged fangs like pointed amethysts against the sky. Then he braced himself and said abruptly—

"Grainger, I want a warrant!"

Grainger quietly produced a blank form and dipped his pen in ink. He waited.

"I've got the man we wanted for whisky-smuggling and the evidence—about two tons of it. It's Campbell."

Grainger lowered the pen and spun around.

"Campbell?" said he, astonishment stamped all over him. "Old man Campbell—our Uncle Sandy?"

"Alexander Campbell," said McMillan stubbornly. You'll find the stuff in the hay corral, hidden in the bales. You'd best hurry. But for Heaven's sake, don't ask me to serve it. There's Hammond and—that's all."

There was silence. Grainger was staring blankly before him as if for once he had lost faith in human nature. But he was only thinking.

"In the hay corral, you say, in the bales of hay?"

"That's what I said," gloomed McMillan.

Forty-Mile Grainger's face was a study for a few moments. Then a smile that had been lurking about his eyes spread over all his face. He struck the table with his clenched fist and sprang to his feet. In a moment he was ready for the trail. He turned an idea-fired face upon us as he slipped fresh shells into his service revolver and filled his canteen with water.

"In the hay, by thunder! In the hay!" he growled. "Don't you worry, my son. I'll serve this warrant myself."

Grainger slammed the door after him and presently the hoof beats of his horse pattered away into the distance. Constable McMillan dropped into the vacated chair and laid his head on his hand.

"*Spotsaquil*" he muttered.

LUELLA saw the scarlet tunic flashing toward her over the prairie hues of burnt umber and olive. He was coming back. He had decided for love. She was glad she had not told her father. She had known it would be thus.

But her eyes widened with diasppointment and terror as she saw that the rider in the scarlet tunic was a bigger man than McMillan even. And he rode differently. Then she knew. It was the corporal, the man they called Forty-Mile Grainger, the man who, by sheer physical strength, had held a horse's head above the surface of an engulfing quicksand for five hours while Constable Hammond rode for assistance.

Forty-Mile Grainger sprang from his horse and removed his Stetson the moment his eyes had taken in the girl from head to foot.

"Your father is at home?" said he. "I hope he has not left," he added quickly, seeing the fear in her eyes.

"He has no reason to leave home today," she replied, collecting herself. "I—I have not told him."

"Thank you, Miss—Miss Campbell, I

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presume?" said Grainger. "He knows me. I'll go up to the house."

He smiled at her in a way that lightened her heart. Surely the enemy could not come with such a smile. She herself retired to the kitchen. She was tempted to listen to what was said in the front room, but it was a trick that she had not been taught at the convent. Despite that, she could hear some of her father's stentorian replies to Forty-Mile Grainger's low-voiced questions.

"I never was that insultit in my life," old Sandy was declaring; "an' him expectin' tae be my son-in-law forbye. But then he's in love, and maybe he just forgot tae say good by tae his host. I'se warrant he did na forget to kiss Lu afore he went. Toots, no! He wad na forget that!"

. . . . . .

"What's that? What's that ye're sayin', lad?"

. . . . . .

"Now, may the guid Lord forgive us our sins!"

. . . . . .

"I did. I did that. I hae mind o't noo."

Then followed a long speech from Forty-Mile Grainger, no part of which, save a quiet murmur, came to Luella's ears. In the end she heard her father's great fist strike the table like a sledge hammer. Presently, to her amazement, old Sandy Campbell opened the kitchen door. His face was twitching in a queer way. He said to Luella:

"Lu, lass, wad ye mind bringin' in a couple o' clean tum'lers? The corp'ral an' me's goin' tae hae a dram!"

And after the dram had been quaffed, Mr. Campbell, still acting queerly, turned from Corporal Grainger to Luella and said—

"An' the corp'ral says, Lu, if it'll no be too much trouble, he'd like to borrow a bit ham an' a couple o' cold chickens an' mebbe twa loaves o' bread."

Toward evening, and with the provisions piled in his arms, Forty-Mile Grainger departed from the Campbell ranch house; and he was not seen again for three days and three nights, although we found his horse in the Little Bend Detachment stables next morning.

AT THE Detachment, Constable McMillan and I spent those three days wondering. If the horse had been returned, watered, rubbed down, fed and haltered, where was Forty-Mile himself and where his prisoner, Campbell? Poor McMillan seemed to be suffering agonies of suspense, but he managed to control himself and conscientiously patrolled to the west, presuming that Grainger was working somewhere to the east.

In the evenings we played cards. Euchre was the game, I remember. Although McMillan played wildly, he persistently won. It was the only time he ever had a run of luck at cards as long as I knew him. No matter what I might hold in my hand, he held better, or euchred me somehow.

On the third night of Grainger's strange absence we played late, hoping for the corporal's return. Right after a deal, McMillan glanced at his hand and suddenly dashed the cards all over the floor.

"Look at them! Look at them!" he fairly raved. "Joker, right bower, left bower, ace—everything!"

"Well, what of it?" I asked.

"Nothing!" he growled, and he went straight to his cot.

We were awakened in the dawn by a hammering at the door. McMillan turned a white face to me and said, almost pleaded:

"You go. I can't. It's Grainger and——"

I opened the door. In walked Forty-Mile Grainger. But he was preceded by as mean-looking a specimen of the genus *homo* as ever was crooked right through. Into his back was pressed the muzzle of Forty-Mile's service revolver.

We recognized the man at a glance. It was the suspected owner of that handy border ranch—Foster!

Grainger urged him to sit down and commanded McMillan to put a pair of bracelets on him. Then Constable McMillan turned open mouthed upon Forty-Mile, who was smiling quietly. I was no less agog to know what had happened, how it had come about, how Grainger had accomplished it.

"Mr. Foster, here," said Forty-Mile, still smiling, "has that homestead about six miles from Campbell's place. About three months ago he went to that gold-hearted old fellow and asked if he couldn't store his Winter's hay supply in Campbell's disused corral until he could build one of his own. Uncle Sandy said, 'Go right ahead, neighbor!' and every bale Foster put in was crammed full of cases of *hootch*. That's

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why we could never find a drop of the stuff on his own premises.

"I'd heard of the loan of the corral for Foster's hay and only thought what a big-hearted fool Uncle Sandy was. But the minute you said 'hay,' McMillan, it was all up with Mr. Foster here. I've spent the last three nights up in the hay with some of Miss Luella's cookery to help out, and last night Brother Foster came sneaking in to cover a little private order for 'fodder!'

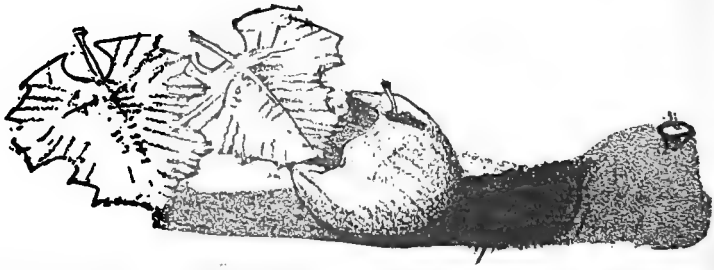
"So here's our man, and Uncle Sandy's out of it.

"By the way, McMillan," added Forty-Mile, turning with a twinkling eye upon the constable, who was scrambling into his uniform with unseemly haste, "as we've got to get Alexander Campbell's affidavit and they were all asleep when the cat got its head in the milk jug, you'd better ride over and—fix things up."

I took charge of the prisoner and locked him up. When I returned, Forty-Mile Grainger was watching from the window the precipitate gallop of Constable McMillan in the direction of the Campbell ranch.

The expression on Grainger's face was curious; half hard, half soft, and touched with bitterness—or was it sympathy? As I have several times remarked in these reminiscences of the Northwest and my friend, Forty-Mile Grainger, I have often wondered what sent him among us.

He was the luckiest man at cards I ever knew.



# HE FOUND THE GARDEN OF EDEN

by S. B. H. Hurst

ME AN' Bill 'Inkman—wot wos a Conway boy wot 'ad gone to the dawgs—wos walkin' up an' down the Mariners' Parade, outside the Sailors' 'Ome in Liverpool, one mornin'—walkin' six yards one way an' back again, like wot we does at sea, though we 'ad all the town to exercise in; we wos doin' this (said Ted Gillet, gazing abstractedly at the pretty barmaid) when an old gent with whiskers like mine come up to us an' said, "Can either of you tell me where the Garden of Eden is?"

"No," said Bill. "There ain't no place called that in Liverpool, but there's a Royal Palace Garden over at Blackpool. Maybe it's that wot you want."

Bill was always a perlite feller.

"No," says the old feller, "the Garden wot I wants is not a garden now—I'm a arkologist," 'e says.

"You mean ark-e-tect," I says, ashamed of 'is ignorance.

"I know wot I mean," 'e says. "But I want to know if either of you are biased," 'e says.

"Are you?" I says to Bill.

"No," 'e says. "But I'm vaccinated though. Won't that do?"

"Will it?" I says to the old gent.

"Will wot?" 'e says, lookin' for somethin' in a notebook 'e'd pulled out of 'is pocket.

"Will bein' vaccinated do as well as the other thing?" I says.

"It's better sometimes," 'e says.

"Well, will we do for the garden thing, or whatever it is you want?" I says.

The old feller looks at us a minute, kind of puzzled—I found out after wot an absent-minded old cuss 'e was—an' says:

"Yes that's all right," 'e says. "I was afraid you was in favor of the theory of the

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U-freight-ees an' (something else wot I ferget). "But since your minds are free, I will be glad if you will join my expedition in search of the real Garden of Eden—you both bein' sailors," 'e says.

I winked at Bill, an' 'e winks at me, neither of us knowin' wot the old feller was gettin' at. Then Bill says—

"What do 'e want sailors to look for a garden for? Ain't they on dry land?"

"Wot does it matter," I says, "where it is, so long as the wages is right?"

"Four pound ten a month," says the old gent, whose name wos Jones.

"Where are we bound?" says Bill.

But the old feller wasn't tellin' anything about the voyage except that it was a pleasure an' explorin' cruise, an' for us to be aboard the *Plato*, in the Birkenhead Dock, not later than ten in the morning of the next Monday—sign on on Saturday. Then 'e takes orf 'is 'at an' 'urries orf.

"Well, I'll be blowed," says Bill. "Takin' orf 'is 'at to us! Wot do you make of it, Ted?" 'e says.

"I think 'e's crazy," I says. "But we'll find out," I says.

"Maybe we're goin' after 'idden treasure," says Bill.

"'Idden angels," I says. "'E's a lunatic, I tells you," I says, "an' there ain't no ship, except in 'is 'ead," I says.

But I was mistook; for the shipping master signed us on all right on the *Plato*, for a pleasure voyage, full an' plenty. An' on Monday we goes on board.

THE crowd in the fo'c'sle was a nice lot of fellers, all of 'em good sailors like meself, an' the old man and the two mates seemed all right. The *Plato* was a nine-'undred-ton bark. Everything was as usual except Jones, the bias feller, wot fussed around all over the place, like a 'en with the earache. The weather was good till long after we'd crossed the Line. I never did see such fine weather and steady breezes.

Jones 'ad the bad 'abit of talking to the man at the wheel, an' of course the old man couldn't say nothing to 'im because 'e was payin' 'is wages. One day he come up to me an' says, Jones did—

"'Ow do you like the food?" 'e says.

"Best I ever seen," I said, which it was.

"I ordered it," 'e said, "an' I'll tell you why," 'e says. "You know a worm just eats wot it comes across, wot is mostly waste," 'e says. "An' 'cos it gets no special food, it doesn't do any special work—it carn't adapt itself," 'e says. "But a man wot picks out 'is food does special work; the feller carefulest," 'e says, "about his food does the best work. I don't mean laborin' work, but science," 'e says.

Did you ever 'ear anything like it? It's the idea I want all the skippers wot I sails with to have. But 'e didn't stop at that. 'E said a lot about mind food, meanin' readin,' and said we should only let the fellers wot 'ad their minds properly fed 'ave a vote. Then one evenin' in the second dog-watch, just before we put the sidelights out, he made us a speech, tellin' us the reason of the voyage.

"Men," 'e says, "I've 'eard you all discussin' the reason of this 'ere voyage with considerable 'eat," 'e says. "Now you've all 'eard of the Garden of Eden in your Bibles," 'e says. "Those wot never heard of the Bible can come to me to-night an' I'll lend 'em mine," e' says. "The Garden of Eden is our destination, gentlemen," 'e says, an' we all sniggered at the "gentlemen," an' I was certain that Jones was crazy.

He went on: "Most scholars says that the Garden is in Asia Minor, but I know better," 'e says. "I won't bother you with details, but the islands called the Diego Ramirez to the south and west of Cape Corn is the site of the Garden of Eden," 'e says. "An' it is there we are goin'," 'e says.

That was the queerest port I was ever bound for, and all the other fellers in the fo'c'sle said the same. We didn't believe there was a place to land, as it was all cliffs, six 'undred feet high. So we sent me an' two others to ask the old man about it. But all 'e 'ad to say was that 'e 'ad no chart of the Islands, as 'e didn't think there was one, an' that 'e was going to send Jones ashore with wot men 'e wanted, an' grub, an' sail off an' on the island till Jones had done all the gardenin' he wanted to.

"Them great, high cliffs is pleasanter the farther they're off," says the skipper, "an' I don't intend," 'e says, "to take any chances," 'e says.

So we went for'ard again an' told the rest wot 'e'd said, an' we all bein' well educated fellers knew wot the Garden was, an' come to the conclusion that it was a bluff on Jones's part so as 'e could get off some buried treasure wot 'e 'ad there, an' was scared

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if we knew we'd want some, the old man bein' in it with him. That seemed the most likely idea, and we decided that we'd send him a letter when 'e got his treasure, scornin' his gold, like all honest sailors should. I was goin' to write the letter.

So the passage went on, until, when we came south of forty, we got strong westerly winds, an' the *Plato* bein' a awful poor sailor, we was set quite a ways to the eastward. But at last the wind went into the east, an' we squared the yards for the first time in weeks. The steward said as 'ow the old man told 'im as 'ow we was about twelve hundred miles from the Horn, when the wind came fair, wot was on a Sunday.

On the Tuesday the wind grew into quite a gale, for, although we was runnin' dead before it, we didn't 'ave nothin' on us but the foresail an' main lower topsail, with the foretopmast staysail set in case she tried to broach to. It was my two to four wheel in the middle watch, an' just about six bells a 'eavy hail squall came up an' made it almost as thick as a hedge. It was the second mate's watch, an' he was standin' by the wheel, watchin' her because she was steerin' wild. All of a sudden 'e looked out on the starboard bow (he was a young feller on his first voyage as officer), an' shouts out loud, "Look at them whales."

I looked where 'e pointed, an' shouts: "Whales nothin'. That's land, you fool."

Just then the feller on the lookout hollered: "Land right ahead, sir! Land on both bows, sir!"

"'Ard up!" yelled the second mate at me, but bly me, I 'ad the wheel 'arf way up before 'e opened 'is mouth, I 'ad, while the watch on deck was hollerin' out wot the lookout 'ad said, an' callin' all 'ands, an' doin' everything all at once, an' the Lord knows wot else, when—*biff! bang! crash!* An' that's all I can tell you about how we struck; for something 'it me on the 'ead an' I didn't remember anything else.

WHEN me sensations gets to workin' again, I felt a fire beatin' on my closed eyes an' I ached all over. The first feller I saw on opening my eyes was Jones, sittin' warmin' himself at a driftwood fire an' watchin' me.

"Comin' to?" 'e says.

"Comin' to where?" I says, kind of dazed.

It was just daylight, an' the rain an' wind had taken off. Me an' Jones was in a kind of a cave without a top—the rocks was all around us to a height of twenty feet—an' the old feller 'ad built a fire.

"'Ow do you feel?" 'e says.

"I'm wet yet an' don't feel very good," I says. "Last thing I remember I was at the wheel," I says. "Tell me all about it," I says, an' got as close to the fire as I could. I'd have asked him for a drink, but I knowed he was a teetotaler, an' wasn't likely to have anythin' with 'im.

"I was in me bunk when she struck, an' I slipped on my clothes," 'e says, "an' ran up on the poop," 'e says. "Just then a great wave swept the whole length of the ship," 'e says, "takin' me and you with it. There was nobody on the poop but you an' me. All hands 'ad run to the braces," 'e says. "I didn't lose my senses," 'e goes on, "an' in a few seconds found myself on the beach, with you alongside me," 'e says. "I've every reason to believe," 'e says, "that the place where we landed is the only part of the Islands where the cliffs are not 'undreds of feet 'igh," 'e says. "If we'd struck anywhere else we'd 'ave been dashed to pieces," 'e says.

"Seen anythin' of the rest of the crew?" I arsks 'im.

"No," 'e says. "I gathered up the wood close 'ere, an' saw nobody. But I'm afraid they're all gone," 'e says.

"Well," I says, "it's up to us to find out if there's any alive. Come on," I says.

The place where Jones 'ad carried me to (he never said how 'e'd done it, the plucky little old runt!) was about fifty yards from the water, what was beating on a shingly beach—just a strip about two 'undred yards long, with towerin' rocks at each end of the bit of shingle. A 'undred yards from the water, where 'e'd made the fire, the rocks began again, so, as Jones 'ad hintimated, there was just that bit of a place where anybody could land on the whole of the Island. Everywhere else was great 'igh rock, an' the *Plato* had hit the cliff, as we tried to bring her round, with the whole of 'er side as far aft as the mizzenmast, with just her stern sticking out where the beach was. So that was 'ow the wave took us ashore. If we'd been any farther for'ard than where we was, we'd have been smashed against the rock.

There wasn't a sign of the ship. Those awful waves 'ad carried away every bit of her—she was an iron ship—an' she must

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have been scraped along the cliffs till she sank in deep water, which would not 'ave taken more than a few minutes. It was a good job for us that the wave come when it did. An', as Jones said, it was funny about that bit of beach, slopin' down as nice as you wanted it, whilst the water alongside the cliffs was Lord knows 'ow deep.

SO WE seen as how there was nothin' left o' the ship, an' the crew must 'ave gone with her, for, as I said, there was no other place they could 'ave landed but where we was, an' they was for'ard when the wave took us, an' the next minute the poop must have been against the cliff like the rest of her. So we was the only two left alive, an' the prospect wasn't pleasant, as Shakespeare says. We only 'ad the clothes we stood up in, an' there was no food but maybe fish, an' I didn't see how we was goin' to catch them.

There wasn't a bloomin' tree on the place, an' it wasn't likely there was any hanimals. So, to put it in a few words, we was in a mess. An' when we got back to the fire — we'd 'ave to be careful of the wood, too, for there was precious little of that on the beach—I said as much to old man Jones, an' at the same time said a few things about the skipper's navigation, even if 'e was dead.

"It was all my fault," says Jones.

"How do you make that out?" I says. "Of course, I knows that Garden of Eden idea of yours was just a bluff, but it was the skipper's fault that we struck, for being away off in his navigation," I said.

Old man Jones pokes the fire with his foot, but doesn't look at me. Then 'e says, as if talkin' to himself:

"It was not the skipper's fault," 'e says. "If I 'adn't forgotten wot I was doin' we'd 'ave been all right," 'e says.

"Wot the dooce are you talkin' about?" I says.

"It was my studyin' of navigation wot done it," 'e says.

"You wasn't navigatin' the ship, wos you?" I says.

"No," 'e says. "It was like this 'ere. I was studyin' of navigation without tellin' anybody about it," 'e says, "an' in a book by Captain Lecky, I came across a place where 'e said the magnets of a compass affected a chronometer, because in port the second mate stowed the compass away where the chronometers was," 'e says.

"But we wasn't in port," I says. "So the compass was in the binnacle, an' not in the cabin, where the chronometers was," I says.

"I know," 'e says, "but it was my bloomin' experimentin' nature wot done it," 'e says. "You see," 'e says, "I 'ad a chronometer in my room, and the skipper 'e 'ad two, and I knew that mine gave the right time," 'e says. "So I took a 'orse shoe magnet wot I 'ad and 'id it between the two chronometers in the skipper's room. That was eight days ago," 'e says, "an' I noticed the first day that the magnet made the skipper's chronometers two minutes fast. The second day they was a little worse," 'e says.

"An' then, of course, I'd forgot I 'ad put the magnet there, an' I never said anything to the skipper about it," 'e says. "An' in these latitudes a few minutes of error in time means a awful lot of miles," 'e said.

"Dooce!" I says.

"Yes," 'e says, his voice quiverin', "I feel like a bloomin' murderer," 'e says.

"It must be awful to 'ave a scientific mind, wot stops workin' now an' again," I says. "Can you remember whether you 'ad a mother or not?" I says.

'E didn't answer me, but kept on starin' in the fire. An' then I began to get 'ungry an' said so to Jones.

"I've got ten days' condensed food in me pocket," says 'e, "wot I brought in case of emergency like this."

An' 'e pulled out a tin box wot 'ad little black lozengers in it, an' 'ands me one.

"One of these 'ere three times a day will support life," 'e says.

"It may support life," I says, "but I know my stomach will collapse unless it gets more props," I says.

"Maybe we can find some shellfish," 'e says, "but they's a 'ighly indigestible food," 'e says. "An' any'ow we didn't come to this 'ere island to eat; we come 'ere to find the Garden of Eden," 'e says. The rememberin' of this seemed to brighten him up a whole lot. An' after we'd finished our little black-tablet dotty, we starts to climb up the rocks to look for the Garden of Eden.

"Say," I says, "it said in the Bible that there was all sorts of nice things to eat," I

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says, "in the Garden, as well as hanimals," I says.

"You're always thinkin' about your stomach," 'e says. "Carn't you ferget it a minute?" 'e says.

"I only wish I could," I says. "But ain't I right about the Garden 'avin' all kinds of fruit an' such in it?" I says.

"That was a long time ago," 'e says. "An' if you remember, when Adam was turned out, there was nobody allowed back till it became a ruin, wot no one would want," 'e says.

"Wot do you want it for?" I arsks.

"I wants to establish my theory about its bein' 'ere instead of where the other arkologists thinks it is," 'e says.

"Where did they find it?" I says.

"In Asia Minor, near the You-freight-ees River," 'e pants, for it was 'ard work for two 'ungry castaways to get up them rocks.

"Your pay will go on just the same," 'e says.

"Thanks," I says. "I was afraid I might get 'ard up 'ere, seein' 'ow 'igh the corst of livin' is," I says.

After a hour's 'ard work we gets to the top, an' finds that, except the way we 'ad come, it was just a great big flat rock with a drop of about six 'undred feet to the sea; an' it was about four miles each way, bein' nearly square.

"Just as I thought," said Jones.

'E seemed to have forgot all about the poor fellers wot 'is curiosity 'ad sent to their death, an' was all full of 'is bloomin' Garden.

"Just as I thought," 'e says, "there was only one entrance, an' the Bible says that a angel with a sword was set to see that Adam didn't get back again," 'e says. "It must 'ave been about 'ere where 'e stood," 'e says, pointin' to the bit of a openin' between the rocks that we'd come through to get on the big rock table where we was. It kind of gave me the creeps to think that I was standin' just where poor Adam and Eve had 'urried out, 'and in 'and, with the serpent laffin' at 'em. Jones made it feel quite real, an' I began to be afraid we'd see somethin' ourselves, an' told 'im so.

"No," 'e says. "The age of miracles is past," 'e says.

"Wot do you expect to find there?" I says.

"Nothin' much," 'e says. "Come on."

So we went on, an' walked towards the center of the plat-o, lookin' for relics of Mrs. and Mr. Adam, so the arkologist could take 'em home with 'im—if we ever got there, which didn't seem very likely. An' then we bore away to the east, because Jones said that Cain 'ad built a city to the east of Eden and called it Enoch. But we came to the edge of the cliff an' found nothing but the sea.

"I expected this," said Jones. "These Islands are bein' gradually washed away, and by and by there won't be any," 'e says. "My theory is that when the ocean has wiped out this place, all mankind will have wiped out his bad instincts an' be good. In that way the curse of Adam will all be wiped out at once," 'e says.

I was beginnin' to think again that the old feller was a kind of crazy, an' that 'e'd escaped from some asylum with a bunch of money. It did look that way, didn't it? But that old man knew just wot 'e was doin', 'e did. An' the next thing he done was to walk to the north end of the table-rock—it was nice flat walking—an' measure the number of steps to the south end, because 'e wanted to find the middle. It was just six thousand steps across, so we walked three thousand back, an' were in the middle of what 'ad been the Garden of Eden, accordin' to Jones.

"Now," 'e says, "I am of the opinion that Adam left some mark so that future generations would be able to find the mark, an' settle the dispute as to where the Garden was."

"Wot kind of a mark do you expect to find?" I says.

"Maybe some hirogliffics, like what the Egyptians done," 'e says. "An' I'll translate 'em an' be famous forever," 'e says.

SO WE started to look for some mark, but didn't find nothin', an' then Jones said that we might not be in the center, an' we'd go a bit farther north, which we did.

Now Jones was a few yards away from me, grubbing around, when all of a sudden 'e gave a yell, an' I ran over to where 'e was an' found that 'e had tumbled over a small square box—about six inches square—made of slabs of stone.

"You're witness," 'e says, all excited, "that I found this box 'ere."

"I am," I says, very solemn. So we kneels down, an' found that the box 'ad been there so long that it 'ad got fast to the rock beneath it.

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"Maybe Adam made it fast," says Jones. "I figgered that the center of the Garden was the only place he could leave anythin', because there are no places for landmarks, an' of course 'e'd make it fast in some way. It's a solemn thought," 'e says, "to think that we are the first human beings to come 'ere since Adam and Eve were evicted."

"It are that," I says, and I meant it. "But open the box," I says.

"We've got to be careful," says Jones. "There may be somethin' in it wot will break," 'e says.

So we got to work with our knives, but the box was very strongly made, an' we only broke our knives, so Jones said:

"We've got to break in the top of the box," 'e says. "But let's be careful, or the contents may possibly be damaged," 'e says.

So we broke in the top of the box with a stone, an' when Jones saw what was inside 'e nearly went crazy with joy—dancin' all over the place and 'ollerin' "yoo-reek-er," an' such like.

"WHAT was in the box?" I interrupted. Mr. Gillet looked at me for a moment. Then he said:

"There was two fig-leaves, a bit withered, an' a apple with a couple of pieces bit out of it. That was all."

# The ULTIMATE INHERITORS

## by Berg Bellair

### CHAPTER I

GOLD!

OLD CAMP CADY suggested to Isaac Pemberton the sight of a youth of eighteen trying to wear the clothes of a lad of ten, as his auto rolled down its principal thoroughfare. Population was increasing at a rate to shame the most enthusiastic Chamber of Commerce on the Pacific coast, while accommodations commanded a proportionate price for those who required food and shelter.

Effects follow causes, even in an isolated, squalid speck of civilization perched on the fringe of a desert. In the present instance one word was the answer, the word at whose lure men dare and do and die—*gold!*

This was the most advantageous point at which men might equip before plunging into the vast, arid profundities of the Mohave



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Desert; and the gold which they brought on their eager quests or the gold which those who returned carried must all pay toll at the desert's gate. Therefore Old Camp Cady was enjoying one of those rare periods of rejuvenation which infrequently revisit moribund mining-communities.

"Not much like the good old days!" laughed Pemberton. "No burros, no gambling, no booze. An old-timer would turn over in his grave if he could see a ninety-horse-power touring-car hitting across one of these desert trails or have somebody hand him a thermos bottle."

The restless throngs of keen-eyed, expectant, lusting men overflowing the camp gave it an air of vitality and "jump" peculiar to localities where "a big strike" has been quickly followed by others. And their hopes were not without reason; for already the stock of the Mohave Consolidated Mines, Inc., was slithering up and down in a local exchange, while an astonishing percentage of the first venturesome trailers were returning with exultant boasts.

Pemberton parked his car with the same care that he would have used in a city, pulled his magneto-plug and locked all four wheels fast. Then he plunged into the milling mass, cool, alert and watchful for some clue that would prove remunerative.

There was much to interest him. From the Kingston Peaks far to the east, the Providence Mountains away to the south, down toward Esseneda de Todos Santos across the international boundary-line of Mexico, humanity had erupted into the superheated wastes after the gold.

Little knots of men within the camp crowded around every automobile whose alkali-flecked sides told of a desert journey. There were rumors, whose magnitude grew with each repetition—incredible tales, true and false, of fresh treasure.

The great basin, shimmering in the rays of a heat all but intolerable, seemed to have become alive. Heretofore most men had sedulously avoided it. Now it appeared as if Aladdin's riches had been actually spread across the sands of southeastern California and were being avidly sought by a horde of determined men, each using a magic carpet on wheels, instead of a mule.

Pemberton listened to it all. He stood unmoved when one loud-mouthed professional prospector sold a mythical claim to a credulous arrival for five thousand dollars and received his money on the spot. He smiled satirically as he thought how the purchaser would go poking the nose of his machine into the huge, uncharted wild, watching his compass and speedometer until he was at the place which the seller had so glowingly described. The vendor would be slipping through the rows of tented streets, presently, fording the river behind the town, and scurrying in the first deep black of the coming night for the railroad at Mohave, some distance to the north.

Two or three days—perhaps a week—hence, and a heart-broken, dour-visaged man would climb back up the ascent into Old Camp Cady, perhaps on his last quart of gasoline, and sell the car to some new arrival.

NIGHT dropped down upon the seething, roaring, whirling vortex in and around Old Camp Cady. Now and again great drums of gasoline and oil, drawn by patient mules, rumbled down from Mohave, followed by wagon-loads of provisions. Camp-fires dotted the tent fronts; the sputter of arriving autos from the Coast cities seemed endless; the odor of cooking assailed the nostrils.

"There goes Walter Weston," spoke a man at Pemberton's elbow. "He walked into this camp three months ago, and he'll ride out a multimillionaire tonight. He's President of the Mohave Consolidated."

"A better-looking man couldn't get the coin," rejoined Pemberton after a swift glance at the stalwart figure, hurrying to the hotel, hedged in by a crowd of eagerly importuning men.

"He sure deserves all he's getting," replied the other in a tone that carried no envy. "But I'm going to have him lashed to the mast, one of these days—that is, providing I can get the capital."

Pemberton turned. "Is that so?"

"Sure as this is Old Camp Cady," positively affirmed the other. "Looky here!"

He glanced warily around before reaching into his pocket and withdrawing a pouch. Pemberton's gaze rested on its contents—clean, coarse, yellow grains interspersed between nut-size nuggets of almost flawless gold. His face paled a little in the gathering gloom, and he nodded repeatedly, at a loss for words. It was this which had brought him to Old Camp Cady—placer gold, such as Weston had found—

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gold streaking the sands of the desert as borax-beds streaked it in Death Valley far to the north. He looked up from the pouch at the man who carried it.

"It's the real stuff," he tersely observed. "How much of it and where?"

"Well, pardner, as to the first I don't know and as to the second I ain't saying—not right off'n the bat. I ain't got a lot of these fancy doo-dads like autos with bottles of ice-water tucked away under the seats—I'm just a plain prospector who don't want to be trimmed. I've got a claim located, and I took this stuff out of it, a good ways from here; that's all I care to say."

"It's not enough for me." Pemberton's voice was chill. "I don't buy anything without knowing what I'm getting. I won't take up your time, if that's all you have to say." He turned away. The other man reached out and clutched his arm.

"Pardner, I guess you got me wrong. I ain't got a claim to sell; but I've got one to work, if a man can help do it. Otherwise my prospect can lay just where I left it until I can find the right party."

Pemberton was slightly mollified. "I thought you were trying to play me for a ribbon-counter clerk. How much does she run?"

"There ain't any use of my painting fancy pictures," obdurately answered the other. "If you've prodded a burro or shook a pan you know that gold is where you find it. I've found it, I've staked it, and I'm looking for some one to get hold of a Rinor dry-washing machine to riffle through the dirt—on shares. There ain't any water like there is back in the hills—it's just one sift, sift, sift. I scraped this here little bundle out in three days with a sieve and some cheese-cloth. Just got in this afternoon."

"How far is it?"

"A matter of a hundred and sixty miles. I had two burros when I went in. I shot 'em both coming out—the last water-hole didn't have enough for three."

"Come over and have a bite to eat. My name's Isaac Pemberton, and I live in Los Angeles. The boys call me 'Big Ike.'"

"I'm Joe Kinzie," returned the prospector. "Are you the Big Ike that grabbed off a wad at Bullfrog in the old Nevada days?"

"The same."

"I thought I'd seen you before. Now, Ike, got an auto?"

"Yes."

"My claim's a —— of a long ways, and the road's hotter than it is long—when you walk. If you'll take a chance on gasoline, I'll take one on the claim. If she runs good, we can talk business."

"You're on."

Pemberton was unlocking the auto trunk strapped to the rear of the machine. A small alcohol lamp, a can of concentrated coffee and numerous tin cans were disclosed. In five minutes a savory meal was ready.

"That's the best grub I've tasted in a month!" grinned the prospector, as Pemberton replaced the utensils. "When do you want to start?"

"Any time. All I need is some more gas."

"Night traveling is lots better than day. We'll strike southeast, following the Barstow Trail until we're opposite the Three Buttes. Then to the left, straight as you can go. I'll sleep a little—I sure need it."

"Any water on the road?" Pemberton was throwing the clutch with his toe.

"Sixty miles this side, plenty. Beyond, nary a drop."

"How's the going?"

"Good until you get to that last sixty-mile stretch. Then there's sand, and now and then wind. Ought to make it, easy, though, with wheel-chains."

The crowd scrutinized Kinzie's tanned face and sand-stained garb as the big car stopped for gasoline. They elbowed and crowded each other, pressing nearer, hoping to pick up some hint of the machine's destination. Lacking initiative and conscience, many would not scruple to jump a new claim in the temporary absence of its owners. Kinzie, however, ignored them and was already asleep when Pemberton emerged from the garage.

"Another strike!" was the whisper passed around. But before the momentary hush had given way to the turmoil of speculative tongues the big machine was racing down to the desert's floor, and Kinzie's snores contested with the explosions of the motor.

Pemberton, nursing the car with an expert's hand, saving every drop of gas possible, sent it whirling through the cool night-air along the well defined trail till the first trace of the dawn outlined the Three Buttes on his left. He glanced at the speedometer. He had driven one hundred and one miles since leaving Old Camp Cady. Then he turned to rouse the sleeping man by his side.

"Where's that water-hole?" asked Ike.

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Kinzie looked around with a start of surprise. In less than seven hours he had retraced a trail which would have taken almost as many days in the old way.

"I'll have to get my bearings," he confessed, rubbing his half-opened eyes. "This here night-flying is a little out of my line. While I have a look around, suppose you put on your tire-chains."

HE LOWERED himself out of the car and scanned the great waste for some familiar sign. The hard-packed *caliche* of the arid upper valley had long ago changed to a boulder-strewn expanse of alkali soil, and the scrubby mesquite with its twittering birds and rodent life which had dotted the intervening section was now merging into a true desert country—wind-blown stretches of relentless sand. Even the cacti were sparser and more attenuated, as if finding the most terrific struggle which nature has ever imposed on the vegetable world a task almost beyond their endurance.

The prospector gazed through the semi-gloom of the early dawn at the hazy, far-off outline of the Three Buttes, low on the horizon to the east.

"That tank should be right around here, somewhere," he muttered. "Perhaps we've run past it; though it wasn't far from the trail, and what's left of my burros should give me a line on it."

Kinzie turned and mounted a boulder to further his range of vision in the increasing light. To the east a bank of dark clouds hung low, shot through with golden, fire-tipped shafts from the coming sun; and there came to his mind an old saw of the weather-wise:

> Evening gray and morning red
> Sends the storms upon his head.

Then his searching eyes caught a glimmer of white, a gleaming network of bones lying in a hollow a few hundred feet beyond. He hastened forward and found two clean-picked skeletons—those of the burros he had mercifully dispatched a few days before.

He gave a shout, and Pembroke straightened from his task of jacking up the rear wheels.

"Here it is, Ike. It don't taste very good going in; but you can gamble it'll be mighty welcome coming out, if we're as baked through as I was."

"All right," responded the other man, throwing out a canvas bucket. "Take this and fill our radiator."

Abnormally large and fiery red just above the horizon, the sun showed clearly outlined for a brief moment before it entered the pall of copper-hued clouds which seemed opaque enough permanently to engulf it. From out the wastes before them a long, exaggerated sigh, a continuous suspiration, appeared to arise, as if the spirit of the desert gave mournful protest against this invasion of the "Never-Never Land."

Kinzie, hardened and practical, although accustomed to the portentous silence and vast distances of the desert, divined something unusual in the ominous birth of the new day; and its depressing gloom engendered in him a vague sensation of impending calamity.

But he crowded back his thoughts and stoically refilled the radiator, hanging an extra pail of water in the tire-rack alongside the tonneau of the car.

"Ugh!" shuddered Big Ike. "This place gives me the creeps, Joe. I've got the chains on—let's beat it. Which way?"

"Due east," replied the other, swinging to his seat.

The chill night-air was warming under the puffs of the breeze buffeting their faces as they left the Barstow Trail and carefully picked their way through the last half mile of rocks to the margin of the great desert between them and the Three Buttes.

Far to the south the Providence Range sprang, dark and forbidding against the leaden sky, as if jealous of the intrusion and determined to offer insuperable impediments to an exit in that direction.

Directly ahead, though still many miles distant, the Three Buttes were outlined in bolder relief against the somber background of the Kingston Mountains, which lay purple-shadowed and mysteriously repellent under the coppery clouds hovering over them. The puffs of air became stronger and more frequent, and the haze of the eastern half of the sky was being rapidly shut off by the wide-flung mantle which hid the sun.

"Say, that don't look good to me," called Big Ike. His voice was barely audible above the swish of the sand beneath the wheels and the unmuffled roar of the laboring engine. "We're in for a nasty sandstorm, and from what I've been told that's

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something nobody goes looking for down here."

"I've been through a couple of them," yelled Kinzie. "They look bad, but you can ride 'em out by covering up and laying low until they blow over."

Far ahead a little cloud of sand arose in a mound, whirled for a moment into an upright position, broke and fell back across the plain in a spray. Then a larger and stronger column took its place, and before the second subsided still others, taller and thicker, had formed and were whisking and whirling over the desolate expanse.

With a magic suddenness, the great valley broke into fantastic dancing demons of sand. They gathered, rose, and fell with an appearance of semi-intelligence, but in their gigantic gyrations never colliding. Each seemed to respect the claims of the others to a certain area of action, and each apparently sought to outdo the rest in absurdities of twisting, bending and writhing. The very horror of it was ludicrous.

It quickly grew darker. The vague, mysterious humming increased until it filled the air all about; and through it rang a shrill, piercing wail, like the oboe solo of a storm-king above the accompaniment of his cyclonic orchestra.

The sand immediately before the venturesome men sprayed up in a stinging cloud which filled eyes, ears and nostrils. Pemberton kicked over the magneto switch. The motor gasped, as if it, too, were fighting for breath, and died. He caught up a strip of canvas lying across some provisions in the tonneau, threw it over the hood, and twisted ends and sides around the radiator to protect the engine.

Kinzie snatched the bandanna handkerchief from his neck, soused it in the canvas water-bucket in the tire-carrier, and whipped it across his face, knotting the ends behind as he pulled his slouch hat tightly over his head and flung himself down beside the stalled car.

Pemberton, vainly gouging at his sand-filled eyes, sputtering incoherent protests against such meteorological behavior, followed the same protective tactics and hurled himself partially beneath the vehicle, which was swaying and jerking in the grasp of the rapidly rising gale.

Came a brief lull, a cessation of the besieging clouds of crevice-searching sand. Then, spewed forth from out the voracious, insatiable wilderness—as if flung from the heart of the tornado itself—lurched a staggering, half-naked human form.

It stumbled across Kinzie's protruding legs, quivered and lay still.

## CHAPTER II

### CHARLIE CLARK—AND THE GIRL

"GOLD is gold, and gold is where you find it," mechanically muttered Charles Clark, tall slender, clean-cut and well groomed, with a nonchalant air of assurance terminating just short of an egotism which would have aroused offense.

He paced up and down the flower-covered suburban railway-station of Barclay with the air of a man who found waiting hard. From time to time he pulled out his watch, glanced at it, and then resumed his steady walk. This he interrupted only when the arriving autos disgorged passengers at the suburb of Los Angeles, on the main line of the transcontinental route to Chicago.

Then he lost his air of preoccupation and invariably peered around the corner to scrutinize the arrivals with eyes which were avidly eager, in spite of the brown lashes and the low hat-brim half concealing them.

"Gold is gold," he muttered again, "but I don't see why in the name of the three-headed dog of Gehenna I have to draw an assignment to poke out to Old Camp Cady and blister my creamy complexion in a desert sun watching a lot of mad Mullahs prod the Mohave sands, when the only gold that I care to fondle is already in plain view—on the head of the sweetest girl in the world."

Clark's swift stride took on a little of his impatience as he mulled over what he would have liked to do and what he must do under his orders. As one of the dependable men of the *News* he was subject to sudden shifts in assignments, particularly when anything that promised a "feature" cast a suggestive shadow on the horizon of impending events.

The California southland, with its marvelous climate, its exotic vegetation, its restful orchards and smiling fields stretching their dollar-laden acres from the blue-green of the Pacific to the purple haze of the hills which hem it in, never stands still.

Fortune peers from the deep loam of the valleys; it stalks along the cement

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pavements of cities whose magical growth and steady increase in values are the marvel of every one who visits them; it gushes in electric-power from the jagged gorges of the high peaks of the Sierra Madre. And now the sterile wastes beyond were whispering of an opulence like to that with which the other sections of the country teemed.

Whatever else may be laid to the door of journalists whose habitat is southern California, lack of perception or paucity of enthusiasm is not among their faults.

So when Jim Mitchell, presiding genius of the news-desk of Clark's paper, and affectionately referred to as the "Gila Monster," focused his psychic powers upon the nebulous cloud of rumor which had filtered in from Mohave, he glanced over the city-room for a two-legged combination of intellect, executive ability, appreciation for the bizarre and novel, and ability to pen what was seen in fascinating, informative, virile English.

In ten minutes Charlie Clark, feeling himself a very luckless individual, had fresh marching orders.

"Get your camera and catch the Valley Express for Mohave," directed Mitchell. "From there beat it over to Old Camp Cady and shoot me in a page in time for the bulldog Saturday night. If you can get enough stuff that will stand the gaff, make it a double truck. Full-fact story; tint it strong if the paint is there.

"From what I know and what I surmise, it ought to be a jim-hickey of a yarn with at least seven kicks to the paragraph. They tell me old Henry Bowen and his partner Weston have cleaned up a couple of million on four claims already. We're strong for Bowen here—for reasons.

"Don't forget to stab in a panel, showing how the merchants of this city will drag down a good percentage in the sale of supplies—you know we beat every one to it when Coalinga broke loose with the oil-gushers. Wheels of time turn back to '49—modern Argonauts—unsuspected El Dorado—all the boost stuff that's in your system. Get me?"

"I'm shot through the heart," groaned Clark, as he started for the dark room.

Which was literally true.

Current and cynical hypotheses to the contrary, newspapermen have hearts, and Charlie Clark was just then acutely conscious of a dull ache around his.

Alert, indefatigable, enthusiastic, he was nevertheless only a reporter; and to him the seething tide of the unearned increment of the pulsating city, the gushing geysers of wealth from orange lands, alfalfa fields, or even fresh auriferous tidal waves rising from Mohave sands, were phenomena which he might observe and describe but in which he was fated not to participate profitably.

If that were not enough, the mention of Henry Bowen's name was quite sufficient to reduce him to a state of mind where innocuous desuetude is a condition to be envied.

Henry Bowen had cleaned up a couple of millions, had he?

So much the worse for Charlie Clark!

One man's meat is surely another's poison, particularly when the man on whom Fortune smiles has a daughter whose personality would send Solomon at the height of his glory to the psychopathic ward after one look—a creature so radiantly beautiful that the most fearless descriptive projectiles in Clark's armory of language were grotesquely incapable of portraying her.

As a student at the Los Angeles High School she had met Reporter Clark two years previously during a field-day. Their quick friendship welled up and ran along as merrily as that rivulet of the Yosemite before it reaches the brink of the loftiest precipice in Hetch Hetchy.

From acquaintanceship their mutual regard steadily deepened and broadened until each came one day to the sure knowledge that in the other lay the greatest happiness which youth and life extend to man and maid—love.

They became engaged the day Beatrice was nineteen. He was four years older.

THEN it was that Charlie Clark accomplished superhuman tasks; achieved beats which made the men on his own sheet gasp at the splendid audacity that enabled him to "put them over"; gathered the warp and woof of human events into shimmering fabrics of news stories whose charm thrilled even the blasé old veterans on the copy-desk, and at times seemed even to transfer the glow of the superb sunsets of that land of enchantment to his steady, pungent feature narratives.

Nothing seemed too difficult; no arduous hike or trying emergency assignment on top of a day of laborious work evoked from him a solitary complaint.

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Smiling, speedy, yet wary and calculating, he tore loose with the dynamic energy which transforms words into hypnotic globules and ripped off new reams of copy with a tireless swing that coagulated would-be critics into silent statues, whose envious sneers froze on their sullen lips.

"How in —— do you keep up your enthusiasm?" demanded the "Gila Monster," after a beat on a murder-story had brought the editors of rival papers up pawing the air with one hand in apoplectic rage, while with the other they sought some missile with which to brain their luckless underlings.

Charlie Clark smiled. The secret was too precious to spread over the dingy city-room—a secret whose center framed the piquant face of Beatrice Bowen, her eyes glowing tenderly from beneath her tangle of golden hair.

The "Gila Monster" studied Clark; then turned with a shrug to his desk. In all the prodigious accomplishments of Los Angeles and vicinity, nothing to him was more amazing than the "come-back" that Clark exhibited on every fresh assignment.

Well indeed did Mitchell know who would handle that Mohave story with a propulsive energy that would lift two hundred thousand readers off their feet when it fluttered from the big presses downstairs.

But Mitchell did not see the black, wrathful glance which his star man turned on the dark-room door, as he entered to load his camera.

How could a mere brute of an editor, whose sole ambition is to shovel news into a daily paper, dream that the little Yosemite brook whose beginning was in Charlie Clark's heart had all but reached the place where it transforms into the "Bridal Veil" —and there now found itself dammed, literally and figuratively, by two millions of dollars?

"Guess it's all off with the big jump!" disconsolately whispered Clark, as he slammed the door and lighted the ruby lamp.

"Two millions! Fine billiards for that old wart of a dad of hers. I'd like to match him ten years' salary against that two millions—one flop; but the only sports nowadays around here are in the light literature which the Carnegie libraries do not furnish to our messenger-boys."

Thirty-five dollars a week sounds nice, but in a country where the Golden Fleece gets sheared every ten minutes it isn't even taxi-money.

"Little David will now load up his camera with film and go out and take a shot at the Mohave Goliath, while old Sol plays Moloch to both of us," was the gibe the young fellow turned upon himself as he went out.

On the street he paused. The time-table, which had almost grown fast to his coat pocket, informed him that he still had three hours before the northbound Valley Express left for Mohave.

He leaped for the nearest telephone-booth and tried to quiet his voice as he called a number.

"Is that you, Miss Bowen?" he queried in professional accents. "Well, this is a reporter for the *News* speaking. The editor of our progressive paper has sent me out for a feature-story on gold. I must have pictures. Now, the richest, rarest, most resplendent auriferous anything I have ever discovered is the hair on the regal head of a certain young lady——"

The music of the spheres seemed to float back in the tantalizing laugh which quivered through the receiver.

"Oh, how do you do, Mr. Clark!" Then in a whisper: "I have to be very formal, my dear; mother is in the next room.—Well, Mr. Clark, I'm very sorry to disappoint you in an interview, but the fact is we leave in half an hour for Barstow—papa is there and has wired to have the Limited pick us up at Barclay. Yes—mother and I."

"For how long?"

"For three months, although we shall, of course, come in to the city frequently. Father has built a beautiful bungalow near Barstow, in the hills, and we have an artificial lake, our own electric and refrigerating plant and lots of other delightful conveniences."

"May I meet you at the train?"

"Yes; but be very prudent, won't you? Mother does not dream of our engagement, Charlie dear; she's harpooning a duke for me already."

Clark hurried out to the Barclay station and waited for the two ladies to arrive. In the hour of leeway which he allowed himself he repeatedly vaulted from the loftiest heights of a sapphire-walled heaven to the deadliest depths of a bottomless hell, and back again.

"Damocles was a piker when it came to

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being uneasy!" he growled. "I wonder if their machine has broken down."

Another interminable period—measuring exactly sixty-seven seconds by the station clock — inspired within him a resolution to join a moving-picture company and star as Tantalus, chained to a rock.

When the auto finally did appear the oncoming Limited was shrieking her responsive howl to the semaphore which the station operator had officiously dropped.

Clark hated semaphores, limited trains, even the perfect day.

He had time only for a brief query or two, put with an urbanity that was marvelous, considering that a churning heart was lashing a fiery fluid that had once been blood along his veins.

The fussy conductor hurried the matron and her beautiful daughter to the Pullman, and Clark stood on the platform, gazing after the train in a dazed fashion, until the whole demoniacal device had whisked out of view.

Then with saddened mien and irresolute footsteps he hurried back to Los Angeles to catch the Mohave Limited. Not until he had bought his ticket did he discover that he might have made practically the same connection on the other road, *via* Barstow, and at the same time have enjoyed the ride over the range with Beatrice Bowen and her mother.

His trip to Mohave was one hundred and five miles of self-reproach that he, a presumably intelligent man, should have overlooked so obvious a fact.

From Mohave he motored to Old Camp Cady, wrapped in a mantle of disgust at the same oversight, dejectedly contemplating the fate that made him a newspaperman instead of a take-a-chance adventurer who ate alkali raw.

Likewise he was utterly oblivious that the weirdest romance of the romantic Southwest was trailing her spangled robe in the wake of the oily gusts behind as the sputtering engine chugged off the miles to his destination.

## CHAPTER III

### WHAT THE PHOTOGRAPH SHOWED

"I WONDER where this specimen came from," mused Big Ike, as the fury of the sand-storm abated.

"Search me," laconically observed Kinzie, surveying the changed landscape with marked dejection. "He looks like he was about all in," he continued, lifting the man's head free of the dust and staring down into his unconscious face. "Give me a thermos bottle."

"Careful, Joe!" admonished Pemberton, as he groped in the tonneau for the fluid. "He can't stand a great deal at first, remember."

"I'm wise," grunted the other man, tilting the flask and forcing it between the swollen lips. "We've got to turn back," he observed. "My claim's buried — we couldn't locate it now without a steam-shovel. Besides, we've got to think of this feller."

Pemberton nodded as he began scooping the sand away from the wheels with the shovel. It was fatiguing work, and the glare of the now cloudless sun soon left him panting.

"Help me put this chap into the machine," said Kinzie. "I'm more used to digging than you are. I guess we've got our work cut out for us to get back to the trail. Better take that canvas and use it to get a purchase on the wheels in this loose sand; otherwise you'll use up your gas without making an inch of headway."

Sweating, puffing, shoveling, fighting their way inch by inch back to the harder ground of the Barstow Trail, both men toiled under the terrible glare of the pitiless sun above. In three hours they had achieved the distance. Before the storm it had taken ten minutes.

"Talk about rotten luck!" observed the prospector, as the machine purred again to the north. "This jinx of mine has to order a cyclone to trim me after fifteen years of nosing around this valley. I wonder why it is that some men just sit back and have everything fall into their hands, while others like me work themselves into the grave and then don't make it?"

"That's one of the things that no one can explain," observed Pemberton. "Perhaps we came down here just to rescue that poor devil, instead of proving the value of your claim."

"I sure am glad that we did something," observed Kinzie, turning to observe the still unconscious man.

They had raised the top of the machine as a partial measure of protection against the heat. The half-nude man whom the

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storm had flung at their feet was ensconced on the rear seat. From time to time Kinzie moistened his parched mouth with a little water. The face was seamed and crusted by the dust of days, the eyelids were bleeding from the sharp whirl of the knife-like particles of sand, and the clothes had been almost torn from the body.

One forearm contained two odd punctures, and was slightly discolored and swollen. Despite their best endeavors they could not rouse him from the coma which had persisted after the sprawl across Kinzie's legs.

"Still," went on the prospector, after a long pause, "there's the devilish luck of it again! Do you suppose a couple of men with an auto would show up in a sand-storm to cart yours truly back to Old Camp Cady? Not on your life! Little Joe, his mama's pride, would now be doing the bleach-act—waiting for the buzzards to swoop down and take a few choice mouthfuls. That's what gets my goat, Ike. I have had the worst of it all my life, no matter what I did."

Pemberton nodded. The bitterness of his companion had a measure of justification, he knew. For himself, their adventure meant nothing more than the expenditure of oil and gas, with perhaps the expense of a new set of tires and the time which he had lost. But it was the essence of tragedy to the patient, plodding man by his side, whose hopes lay blanketed beneath the tons of fresh sand which had probably swirled over his latest claim.

But there was no resisting the inevitable. No man, even with unlimited gasoline, lubricant and plenty of water, could hope now to traverse that gruesome, billowy stretch between Barstow Trail and the Three Buttes, no matter if all the gold that California had produced was lying ready for his hand at the journey's end. Later, it would pack sufficiently hard to support a car.

He turned to look at the still unconscious, gasping figure. Now and again a faint moan crept through his lips. The mystery of a man in such a remote and desolate place was something which might never be explained. Perhaps, like themselves, he was in search of the treasures of the desert. He might have become lost, gone mad with the unbearable heat and lack of water, and wandered for hours in a delirium until the storm had cast him at their feet.

Still, Pemberton reflected, he did not look like a prospector. There was the high, intellectual forehead, visible beneath the accumulated grime which reached down to the matted beard below. The strong, aquiline nose, the eyes, deep-set beneath bushy brows, the dominant chin, whose angle formed a straight line from the base of his ear, all bespoke determination and a degree of culture not in harmony with the shallow enthusiasm which leads the tenderfoot into desert wilds seeking gold.

The crowds at Old Camp Cady were larger than when they had left. They pushed around the machine, waiting to learn the result of the mysterious journey of the night before.

"Give us room, will you?" snarled Pemberton, as they pulled up at the hotel. "And get a doctor for this fellow."

Willing hands aided them to carry the still breathing man into the parlor. With a courtesy not always found in frontier camps, the occupants of the room turned it over to the arrivals. Tomorrow it might be their turn. A flat tire, a leaky radiator or gas tank—any or all of a thousand unforeseen contingencies might trap them in the pitiless desert wastes, as this pathetic figure had been caught. Only a miracle brings back the lost from the interminable stretches of the Mohave—as many gleaming, grinning bones attest, along the Barstow Trail.

THE curious crowd at the door drew apart as Doctor Rudolph Anderson hurried in. He felt for the pulse of the grimy, listless body with professional celerity, ordering water for sponging off the man's face as he reached for his instrument-case.

"His arm first," commanded the doctor, filling a hypodermic syringe into which he had thrust a tablet. "His heart is almost gone."

Pemberton laved a small area until it was comparatively clean. The physician drew back his hand with a startled look. His eyes fastened upon the two punctures in the forearm.

He hastily plunged the needle into the tissues and pressed the plunger to the syringe. Then, refilling it and adding two tablets instead of one, he repeated the operation.

"I wonder what that means?" Doctor Anderson pointed to the dual mark. "This man has all the symptoms of toxic poisoning of some character."

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"It ain't a rattler-bite," replied Kinzie, emphatically. "He'd never stood the ride back in that case."

"No, indeed," observed the physician, tearing open the tattered clothing covering the unconscious man's chest, and applying his stethescope over the heart as he listened.

"It's taking hold, that nitroglycerine," he observed. "I never gave a man three-fiftieths of a grain before at one time; but he'd have slipped off if I hadn't, I guess. Hello! What's this?"

His fingers had clutched a little roll of something which had been wired to the man's shirt. Around the dirty-white cylinder was a bit of handwriting. Pemberton carried it over to the window and read:

Dr. Ludwig Bauer, Berlin.
Preserve with care.

"Unless I'm mistaken," said Big Ike, turning to address Kinzie and the physician, "this is a roll of photographic film. Dr. Bauer evidently thought well of it. It seems to have been the last thing he cared to keep of whatever outfit he went in with. I'm sure he didn't have anything else when he stumbled on us; ain't you, Joe?"

The prospector nodded affirmatively. The physician was pouring a little water into a cup. He added a spoonful of brandy and raised the patient's head.

"Swallow this," he commanded. The victim complied and lay back on the table with a long-drawn sigh.

The crowd at the door parted again and a fourth man entered.

"I'm Clark of the *News*," he announced. "Outside they told me some one had rescued a dying prospector. Is that him?"

He was whirling a focal-plane newspaper camera into position before his inquiry had ended.

"Stand back from the window, will you? I need a little more light."

Pemberton raised the curtains until the room flooded with the afternoon sun. The click of the camera followed. With a twist of the nobs, Clark raised his eyes from the instrument.

"Now who brought him in, please? Hurry, boys; I want to develop these plates and shoot the prints out to Mohave tonight. Who, when, where?"

"We do not know the man," replied Pemberton. "Perhaps this may give a clue to his identity. We found him—or rather he found us—in a sand-storm one hundred miles down the Barstow Trail, early this morning. He staggered into us just as we sought shelter."

He handed the newspaperman the roll of film.

"Bully! I've got a developing-outfit up in my room," announced the reporter. "Come up with me and we'll run this through the developer the same as I do his picture. Gee! What a yarn! 'Surrendered by a Sand-storm'—that's a peach of a line!"

Pemberton hurried after the quick-witted reporter. His room at the head of the stairs was directly over the parlor where Dr. Bauer was being slowly brought back to consciousness.

"You wait here," ordered Clark. "My dark room isn't large enough for two."

Pemberton sat down. Inside the clothes closet he could hear the swish of the water as the other man manipulated trays. It was characteristic of the profession—the swift, precise energy, capitalizing seconds in the endless race against time, that men thousands of miles away might have that dearly bought commodity—the news.

The reporter seemed a long time. At last the door burst open and he leaped excitedly into the room.

"What the ——!" he cried. "Where did that roll of film come from, mister?"

"It was wired to his shirt. Why?"

"Why? Great guns! Look here!"

Clark grabbed the other by the arm and dragged him to a window.

"This is the first of the developed films," he explained. "I pulled a quick print as soon as I had run them all through. Look at that, man, and tell me, if you can, what the devil it means?"

His face was ghastly white, and there was an undertone of horror running through his words. Mechanically Big Ike scanned the print, still dripping.

His own face blanched. He was looking down into the great eight-eyed face of a monstrous spider, whose fangs were buried in the neck of a man on whose chest the insect was sprawling with its eight legs.

And as clearly defined as the fiendish expression on the insect's face was the face of its victim—a despairing, plaintive expression of utter helplessness!

Nor was that all. Behind the two figures in the photograph's foreground loomed other spiders—each glaring fiendishly but

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impotently upward, as if mad with ferocity, while unable to reach the camera pointed in their direction.

Pemberton quivered. Strong, virile and unquestionably brave, there was nothing in all his hitherto adventurous life so unspeakably ghastly as the despair in the eyes of the man which looked up into his own.

He turned to the reporter.

"Well—come across!" harshly demanded the scribe.

The instinct of his profession was proof against the momentary terror which he had evinced in the quick stride toward the window.

"You say you got this Dr. Bauer, or whatever his name is, a hundred miles south and a little east of here?"

Pemberton nodded.

"For Heaven's sake, man! Can't you talk?" He pointed at the picture with a gesture of rage. "There's the biggest story that a newspaperman ever went against—unless it's a fake! Who is this Doctor Bauer, and how the devil did he get a picture like that? It's no fake. Look at that man's expression; no artist could ever paint such lines. And look at that spider—he's bigger than the man! That shows it isn't trick photography, with the spider posed after the whole thing had been brought closer to the camera to get the effect of perspective on the insect. What do you know about that, anyway?"

Before Pemberton could reply there was a knock on the door. Joe Kinzie stuck his face inside without waiting for the invitation to enter.

"Say, Ike, he's coming around. And he's raving about spiders! Come down and listen to him, will you?"

## CHAPTER IV

### SPIDER LIFE

"LIE down!" commanded Dr. Anderson to the frantic man on the table. "You're almost dead. Why, not one man in ten would survive what you've been through."

"*Gott!* Do you think I do not know it? But what of the others?"

"Your friends, do you mean? Never mind them until you are stronger. Then we'll send machines out for them. Where did you leave them?"

A harsh laugh broke from the German. His face and hands had been thoroughly cleansed and new clothing had been provided. His glaring eyes held a mad desire to speak.

"The others?" he echoed. "*Herr Doktor*, I beseech you, do not let me die until I have told what I have seen—for the others' sake."

"That's right—take it easier," smiled Anderson, lifting another glass to his lips. "A little sleep and you will remember everything."

"No, no — you will not understand," harshly replied the frantic man. "It is not sleep I mean, nor my friends. Already they are dead—or worse!"

He straightened himself to a sitting position and swept them with his commanding eyes.

"Listen—all of you!" The tense earnestness of his voice thrilled through the room. "By the others I mean—*the human race!* I tell you it is threatened. Laugh, if you wish, at the ravings of a man who has lost his way in the desert. Think you I feared that desert? Why, its heat and sands were as welcome as water and trees are to others. Doctor—I beg of you in the name of the founder of your system of medicine—keep me alive, if you can, until you have heard my story. I am not mad—I took care to bring proofs——"

He broke off, feverishly fingering his waistline. He plucked at the wire and his cry of anguish wailed through the room.

"My photographs! I had them when I started toward the auto as the storm broke. Go back to where I was found—quickly, I say! Go back and dig through that sand; search it grain by grain through your hands until you find those photographs—a little roll——"

"We found them, Dr. Bauer." Pemberton leaned over and smiled reassuringly into the man's face. "You must do as Dr. Anderson asks until you have a little more strength. Then we will find out what you know and be guided by your advice. Trust me—I brought you back to Old Camp Cady myself. We have already developed some of the films——"

He could not repress a shudder. The quick eye of the listening German noted it. A great smile of relief played over his strained features, relaxing them into their normal lines.

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"*Ach, Gott!* I am unspeakably grateful—but not for myself. If you have the photographs, that is more than I ever believed would be done through my poor instrumentality. Only the thought of the fate of the human race drove me hour after hour across that terrible desert—terrible, but gentle and kind, compared to what I left behind. Be it so. I will sleep for an hour—but no longer, mark you! If I weaken, *Herr Doktor*, you will stimulate me to whatever lengths are needful to rouse me to tell what I have to say—regardless of what follows. Those are my commands, do you understand? For what is my one, poor, feeble life when weighed against the lives of the world—those that now are and those that are to come?"

He swallowed the medicine which Anderson gave him, and with a faint smile leaned back on the pillow which some one had brought.

"Holy smoke!" howled Clark, rushing the knot of wondering men at the door as if he were a Yale man with the ball on Harvard's five-yard line. "What the devil will the balance of those pictures show, I wonder? I'd give a good deal to have a wire into Los Angeles. Somebody get me a man to carry my dispatch to Mohave, will you? Twenty-five dollars for the job!"

Pemberton and Kinzie were close behind as he mounted the stairs. In half an hour the other five prints were made.

"Dr. Bauer is evidently an expert at photography, and has a nice sense of discrimination," remarked the reporter, when he had finished. "Look here, and you'll get me. Every one of these pictures is taken with an idea of showing different phases of this spider life. Here is a mother with her young. Count 'em; my eyes gave out when I'd got to seventy-eight. See them, there on her back and running about her legs?"

The two men scrutinized the print. The mother spider was as gigantic as the one in the first photograph. The sight lacked only the element of a helpless human being to arouse fully as great a sensation of terror.

"This might be a scrap," observed Clark. "Two of them seem to be mixing it. Maybe the old man stopped into a gin-mill on the way home and left his pay-envelope. Anyway, it looks as if the old lady was trying to break off his leg. 'Wedding Bells Jangle in Spider Summit.' Not a bad line, eh?"

His cheerful badinage made the gruesome picture a little less awesome. But the tremendous proportions of the insects were formidable as ever, and a thrill of dismay passed over Pemberton as he recalled the persistent manner of the German and his sharp cry of protest against his personal comfort. No wonder the man did not desire to sleep after what he had seen! If spiders such as these should be prevalent in any near-by corner of the world, what would humanity do?

"I don't just make this one out, unless it's the spider colony's cold-storage plant," bantered Clark, holding up another print. "Look at those webs; and see that big snake hanging there? Looks like he'd stuck his head in a sack, or they've sealed it up for him. And this is a toad, and here are a few birds, and I couldn't make a mistake in that lizard—I've got his mate playing around my bungalow every day. Wouldn't that frost your budding whiskers? Why, they used to teach us at school that all these things ate spiders, and now it looks as if the spiders would eat them. Otherwise why do they hang them up that way?"

"I know pay-dirt when I see it," averred Kinzie, "but the only spider that ever got close to me was a tarantula; and I smashed him with a spade, *pronto*. Excuse me! Say, Ike, it's lucky for us it rained sand instead of these here critters, this morning. Why, they look as if somebody had crossed the spider family with elephants and got quite a fair-to-middlin' run of in-betweens. Gosh all hemlock! I'm going to quit roamin' around this here desert without I wear a parlor stove for overalls."

"Our next subject," went on the reporter, imitating the tones of a professional platform speaker, "is entitled, 'The Cordage Trust's Only Rival.' Get this, boys! Goodnight to the rope factories! No more slaves on hemp plantations in the far-off Philippines! Our little brown brothers are free at last. Why should they work when a spider about as big as two Turkish rockers will kindly spin a few fathoms on request? And here you are—caught in the act!"

The satirical description was borne out by the photograph. An unbelievably huge spider was deftly guiding the cable which was emerging from its spinnerets, holding the strand in its last two feet to keep it from becoming entangled in surrounding objects.

"Looks as if he enjoyed it!" grimly

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remarked Kinzie. "Why, that is big enough to rope a steer with! What the devil are we up against, anyway?"

"Or support a small bridge," gravely added Big Ike, supplementing the first half of his friend's remark. "As to this game, Joe, it's a mighty curious—not to say alarming—one. What would you do if they had you tied up with a rope like that?"

"Begin regretting a misspent life," promptly retorted his friend. "What does number six show?" He craned his neck to overlook Clark's shoulder.

"If this wasn't real," mused the loquacious reporter, "I should say it was a cover for a new song entitled, 'Waiting at the Web.' Great Jehoshaphat! That thing must be ninety feet high, judging by the size of the old duck in the middle," he rambled on. "Look at the way it's anchored to the rocks at the entrance of that cañon! Take it from me, friends, old Dr. Bauer is a strong-minded man not to have the willies after looking at a thing like this. Why, a man could drink a distillery dry and never imagine a spider as big as this chap. I wonder if he's ready to wake up and come through with the story? I've got to get him to sign it and swear to it—or it'll never get by the editor of the *News*."

PEMBERTON and Kinzie had already passed the stage where horror and amazement struggled for the mastery. Their own hands had brought this unbelievable evidence back to Old Camp Cady and their own eyes had witnessed the genuineness of the record. Yet they could not credit what they saw. It was too supremely terrifying for belief. A man in the grasp of such an insect as the camera portrayed would be as helpless as a babe.

They gazed at each other, both comprehending as never before that shrill demand of a half-dying German to be allowed to reveal a secret which was without precedent in history—the story of a menace which, as he had truly said, threatened the human race.

"This particular gink," went on Clark, who was intently studying the picture of the great web festooning the mouth of the cañon, "could catch all the games that Walter Johnson pitches for his team without ever putting on a protector. Look at that belly of his—it's got a shell on it unless I'm mistaken, and the crust of the thing must be three feet thick!"

"Let's go downstairs and see how Dr. Bauer is getting on," replied Pemberton. He had seen enough. Kinzie and Clark followed silently. The curtain of the descending night seemed a black pall which might hide beneath its obscurity an attack by a horde of these mysterious adversaries, whose very existence, until that afternoon, had been undreamed of by any of them.

A chorus of excited voices drifted in through the hall door as they approached the entrance to the parlor. They stepped out on the veranda and looked at the crowd gathered around an automobile.

The driver was pallid with fear. He had to be helped to the ground. The solitary passenger in the tonneau seemed likewise stricken with a dread which he could not voice.

"Am I crazy?" howled the chauffeur. "Then ask Mr. Bowen there! He's connected with the Mohave Consolidated, and worth a million or two. Ask him if he won't bet every nickel of it that I'm telling the unvarnished truth when I say that spiders—get me; spiders—half a dozen of them—as big as this car, some of them, tried to tip over our automobile coming from Barstow not sixty miles from here—and drove the machine off the trail across the sands!"

"It's true," gasped the magnate. "We had a terrible time getting away. One of the things chased us for half a mile, and we had to use every ounce of speed to escape. *My God, men! My wife and daughter are alone seven miles this side of Barstow! What shall we do?*"

He tottered forward and fell on his face. Those nearest carried him up into the parlor where the sleeping German lay on the table. Clark paled and staggered at the news of the terrible peril in which his fiancée was placed. So, after the manner of some natures, he took refuge in flippancy.

"Business is certainly looking up for Doctor Anderson!" he grimaced. "Nothing like having a few happy little spiders to lug in the coin for you—if they don't lug you back for the babies to play with. Wake up the professor, Doc, and let him come across with the story. Squirt a little hop into him if he starts to flop—I don't want the *News* to have to hold its presses too long."

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## CHAPTER V

### THE WORLD-MENACE

DR. ANDERSON shook the still-sleeping man. The German leaped upright, a sudden spasm of alarm crossing his haggard face. His wild eyes steadied as he comprehended the eagerly waiting men who had filled the room.

"I remember, now," said he, accepting the glass of brandy and milk which the physician tendered. He drank it with relish and was aided to the sofa by Pemberton and Kinzie. Leaning back against the gaudy plush of the couch, he took in the details of the room before beginning.

At his side, with an expression of one to whom everything that he has held dear is already ashes on his lips, sat Henry Bowen, partner of Walter Weston and second principal owner of the great Mohave Consolidated Mines, whose dry washers were turning out tens of thousands of dollars daily from the desert's golden bosom.

In the deep silence of the room all standards of values seemed to fade and die; even the millions of the gray-faced prospector who sat nearest Dr. Bauer took on the semblance of unreality. As Joe Kinzie looked at the frightful agony which the magnate was repressing, he felt that all the gold which the Mohave had produced would not induce him to change places with the millionaire. The swift sequence of surprises which had fluxed through the last twenty-four hours left him dazed and wondering.

What amazing things were to follow next? It was almost the very hour of the day previous that he had met and talked with Pemberton.

"I heard your statement, Mr. Bowen," began Dr. Anderson. "I think that the best thing that can be done, regardless of what has happened, is to hear what Dr. Bauer is able to tell us about these spiders. If I am not mistaken, he has seen them at much closer range than yourself; and upon what he says will largely depend what measures shall be taken to protect the unfortunate ladies you mentioned a moment or two ago. Dr. Bauer, will you not tell us what you know?"

The little audience, now augmented by heads peering in at the windows and doors, was hanging on the scientist's slightest word. They had come seeking gold, but they now waited for details of the astounding story which the frantic chauffeur had brought into Old Camp Cady. No man could doubt the truth of the tale, nor could any explain it. The silence was unbroken as the German began:

"I am Ludwig Bauer, of Berlin, assistant superintendent of the Imperial Radium Products Corporation. Six months ago the chief of the laboratory brought me some rock which contained a vastly higher percentage of uranium than any which we had been able to secure. It had been shipped from America, he explained. After my analysis and report it was decided that I should come to America to examine the source of this rock, and, if it carried anything like the uranium values which the samples showed, to arrange for its purchase.

"I reached Yuma, on the Colorado River, some three weeks back. My equipment contained the usual assay outfit, various special chemicals for testing powdered rock, a microscope and a camera. Photography has been a hobby with me, and in addition to the ordinary landscape-lens which was to be used to take pictures of the formation of the rock I carried a telephoto lens of unusual power and delicacy, with which to make pictures of the scenery."

The scientist paused to take another sip of the milk and brandy. Though he bore himself coolly, the reporter was inwardly in frantic haste to hear Dr. Bauer's story, so that with all the facts in his possession he might plan the rescue of Beatrice and her mother.

"What did I tell you?" whispered Clark to Kinzie.

The prospector nodded and turned to the scientist, who was ready to go on with his story.

"Our party consisted of six white men, including myself, and two Indian guides, who were to paddle us up the Colorado to the point nearest the location of the mine. Lars Larsen, a Swede, was the man with whom we were dealing. In this journey by river we avoided the necessity of crossing the desert during the hot weather.

"We arrived safely and dismissed the Indians, who returned to Yuma by the same route. Larsen took me to his claims, which were in the Kingston Mountains, directly east of three unusual peaks. He called them the Three Buttes. They may be seen from the desert on this side for miles.

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"For two days we worked, thoroughly prospecting the claim. I made many tests of the rock. The evening of the third day we prepared to blast off an even more promising portion of rock on the side of the mountain than his first specimens. It was undoubtedly rich in uranium deposits. It was my intention to ascertain definitely, if possible, the extent of this vein. If it led deeper, the property would be very valuable for the needs of my syndicate.

"We withdrew to a safe distance after planting a charge of much larger proportions than usual, for time was pressing and I had far to go. The charge exploded and, much to my surprise, disclosed a cavern of some sort which led into the mountain. I knew from the fresh surface of the rock thus disclosed that the ore would probably exceed even the values which I had expected.

"Larsen was jubilant; and while I returned to our camp on the hills above to obtain my testing-apparatus, he and the four other men penetrated more deeply into the mysterious cavern which the blast had disclosed.

"I was forced to make a considerable détour. The explosion had torn off the rock up which we had been in the habit of climbing and I went almost a mile farther on before I could again reach the camp. I had obtained my camera, intending to photograph the face of the rock and the cavern, and was in the act of focusing it from a projection which jutted out over the cavern's mouth, but some eighty feet or so higher, when I heard a horrible cry of alarm. Larsen came running from the hole."

THE German shuddered. He seemed to crumple together as if the recollection of what he had seen was too much for his enfeebled condition. He willingly surrendered to the waiting hypodermic which Anderson slipped into the muscular tissue of his forearm.

"I would like a drink of water," he whispered. He gulped it greedily, and went on.

"I should have said that I had fitted the telephoto lens to the camera so that I might get a clear negative of the face of the freshly exposed rock. It was growing late in the day, and I realized that it would take me at least a half hour before I could return by the way I had come, carrying the camera and other instruments.

"That accounts for the clearness of the pictures which I brought back with me. It will also substantiate my story; otherwise I could expect no one to believe it.

"As I have said, Larsen ran and shouted. It was between a scream and a bellow—a cry of superlative fear. He was a big man, this Swede—at least six feet two inches and built proportionately. Also he was swift of foot. But it was unavailing—his strength or his speed. Behind him scurried and leaped a horrible, monstrous *something*—a thing which I could not comprehend until later. Just at the spot where Larsen himself had planted the powder for the blast it overtook him. He went down like a man struck by a ton of rock. The demoniacal thing which had captured him gave a bound and forced the writhing man against the rocks, holding him immovably.

"Then it sank its great fangs into his helpless neck, rubbing another toothed portion of its anatomy up and down the slowly sinking, devilish daggers it was driving home into Larsen's neck. The clashing of these toothed pedipalps against the bony mandibles almost drowned Larsen's frantic shouts for aid."

Clark paled and chilled at the thought of his fiancée in a similar strait.

"But I could see the despair in his eyes," continued the Doctor. "I was so horrified that I almost fell over on top of the unspeakably repugnant thing which had overtaken and was slowly murdering the man I had come so far to bargain with. In my convulsive movements I subconsciously clutched the bulb of the camera in my hand. I remember hearing the click of the shutter and my own cry of helpless rage seemed to come from far off.

"The thing that was spearing Larsen to the floor of the rocky cave turned its awful eyes up at me—eight of them. I could not have asked for a more perfect pose for a photograph than it afforded me. I closed the shutter with another swift pressure; and that picture, gentlemen, you will find on the first negative of the roll which I carried out with me and which my good friend here tells me has already been developed. If that is so, you may then see what I saw; for I took good care to keep that film and five others—lest all the world believe me mad."

"Let the boys look it over while you rest a bit," interposed Dr. Anderson. "And a

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little more of this brandy and milk, Doctor, will probably help you to finish what you have begun."

"Thank you." The German leaned back, apparently oblivious to the expressions of incredulous horror which went around the room. Then he swayed drunkenly in his seat, muttering incoherently, and fell forward unconscious to the floor.

No superlatives which the language contained could convey to the other men present the awful peril to which Henry Bowen's wife and daughter were exposed—only that photograph, with the sinister background of hideous monsters, apparently numberless, and so gigantic as plainly to show an unusually large man a pigmy in the clutch of one of them.

"Gentlemen," remarked Dr. Anderson with a decision which no one questioned, "I will ask that you retire, please. Dr. Bauer must have a sedative and complete rest for at least eight or ten hours. If his condition is such that he may be seen at the end of that time, I will notify you."

"This way!" hissed Clark, as the crowd streamed out. "Where is your machine, Mr. Pemberton?"

"Down the street a little way. Why?"

"I want you to drive me over to Mohave. I can get a long-distance 'phone from there to Los Angeles. This story is too frightfully unique for one man to stand sponsor for it. Will you back me up, when I post our paper? Of course I'll pay you for the trip."

Moreover, Clark thought to himself, on the way over he could plan the rescue of Beatrice; and with Los Angeles on the 'phone—who knows?

"Sure!" Pemberton strode down the avenue. Kinzie followed frantically.

"You ain't going to leave your one-day partner to be et up by one of them spiders, I hope!" he growled to the other man. "My Heavens, Ike! Who'd have believed that we were going to lug back all that stuff when we started out to prospect a claim that would make the Mohave Consolidated look like a plugged dime? I suppose one of them eight-legged brutes is buildin' monuments on it, right now!"

"Oh, come along of course, Joe. I'm an iron man; nothing worries me. But we'll have to lay off in Mohave long enough to take forty winks, or I'll be steering cross-lots right for the place they tried to sack old man Bowen's machine. What a look he had on his face! Holy mackerel! If that yarn is true, we're up against it for fair in this section."

"True?" echoed Clark, as he climbed into the machine. "Don't the pictures prove he's telling the truth? And don't Bowen's story back it up? There's just one thing I don't understand: how did those spiders get so close to Barstow Trail when they didn't come up with the crazy German, reeling all around the desert in a sand-storm?"

Kinzie reached over to thump the newspaperman squarely between the shoulders.

"Cricky!" he yelled. "You've hit it! The storm blew them down within striking-distance of the trail. They was following his nibs and the big wind just naturally swirled them away out of their mountain nests."

"Get out!" jeered Pemberton, twisting the steering-wheel and describing a sharp turn up Old Camp Cady's principal thoroughfare. "Do you mean to tell me that a wind could pick up a spider that weighs as much or more than a man and slam it across sixty miles of sand?"

"Say, Ike!" The prospector pushed his face over into the front of the car. "We were on the edge of that storm, weren't we? And there was columns of sand that would outweigh fifty spiders, crawling up two, three hundred feet into the air. Mean to say it couldn't carry a spider? Why, I thought the auto was going to turn aeroplane, more than once.

"We'd been in one fine fix if we'd happened to hit on the middle of that job-lot of sand-spouts. Ugh! I can see those devils dropping from the skies. Say—mebbe they'll be tackling Old Camp Cady itself before we git back from Mohave!"

"I'll believe anything since I saw that photograph," seriously returned Pemberton. "The question that old man Bowen asked has come to mean a whole lot more than when he asked it. It's frightful to think of those poor women being dragged off across the sand by such things as that German photographed."

Clark shuddered imperceptibly.

"He's a gritty little devil," Pemberton continued. "But what shall we do? It would take an army to clean up the numbers that showed in that photograph. What the devil would we do if they should get hungry and start over the sand toward the nearest town?"

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"We'll hit the grit!" tersely answered Clark. "I'll bet I'll be pacemaker for the bunch if that happens. How that German must have combed the gravel down the hill! Oh, rats! We're all nutty or dreaming! Spiders as big as men? There ain't no such animal!"

"I wish there wasn't!" sighed Joe Kinzie. "But until you've walked up that gorge and can bring back a photograph showing a cañon free and clear of all spider webs and other incumbrances, yours truly will take to the ballyhoo down at Venice or some other place, close to the big briny. Say, do spiders swim?"

## CHAPTER VI

### AFTER THEM!

"WHAT do you mean, you lost your dog?" sarcastically replied the night editor of the *News*, to an unoffensive telephone transmitter whose receiver had been pouring a Niagara of resistless words into his blasé ear.

"Say, Mitchell, don't you know a piece of news when you get it? You sent me over here for features, didn't you?" snarled Charlie Clark from the Mohave booth. "I don't ask you to take my word; I brought over the two men who found this German in the worst sand-storm the lower valley has ever known. I printed up the negatives he'd wired to his undershirt.

"If that ain't enough for you, start out some other man and interview Bowen, vice-president of the Mohave Consolidated. Those same spiders almost got the old man —he's Weston's partner; remember? I tell you, a tremendous story has broke loose down here and I've beat every other newspaper in the State to it. I'm going to bulletin every rag in the world as soon as I've given you the details. Why——"

"Say, Clark!" The stern accents of his chief carried their frigid quality across the copper connection without a tremor. "Have you gone plumb nutty?"

"Never was saner in my life—haven't even had a glass of beer. This country's dry, you know."

"I don't mean that. I mean, if it's true, we won't dare print that yarn. Think of it, man! You've been on this Coast long enough to know that such a story would kill it for six months to come. What would happen to the tourist trade? They're due to begin streaming into this valley within four weeks. Wake up! Those millionaires out Pasadena way alone spend ten thousand dollars a day in this valley for three months, to say nothing of the little fry. If we pulled a story like that, even if it is two hundred miles east of us and on the other side of the Coast Range, we'd lose a million dollars' worth of business before we'd get another real-estate ad back in the paper."

"Oh, very well, Mitchell! Perhaps you'd prefer to have a big spider slam his hooks into you! But I wouldn't."

"Don't fly off the handle, Charlie. I give you all the credit in the world, my boy. You're a live wire—none better. But those spiders ain't going to be frightened off by reading your story or the editorial comment on it, are they? But down here it's different. The men that support the *News* would be so scared that they'd never loosen up again for a generation, Charlie. That's where your bread and butter come from, remember, as well as mine. Organize an expedition and go back and hammer —— out of the spiders, and draw double time while you're on the job, if that will please you."

"I tell you the spiders are as big as men—the photographs I've sent down by mail show one of them squatting on a Swede that could knock out Jim Jeffries in his prime, Mitchell!"

"All of which confirms what I say, Charlie—the greater the menace, the greater the need for keeping it quiet while you wipe it out. There isn't a newspaper East or West that would credit such a yarn, and there isn't one that would get a chance to stick it on a machine after they'd confirmed it before the owner would order it killed.

"I'll tell you what you do—beat it back to Old Camp Cady and send me by mail a confidential account of what follows. I'll take this down to the executive committee of the Chamber of Commerce, and make them our eternal friends instead of our everlasting enemies. They'll spend a million dollars, if necessary, to clean up anything like that. But get the facts for me; that's a good boy. Anything you want in the way of expenses I'll send you by telegraph, up to five thousand dollars. But don't talk about any more spider stories—they're the last thing I want for publication. Now, when will I hear from you again?"



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"As soon as something breaks in Old Camp Cady I'll beat it back to Mohave and call you on the 'phone."

"Do that little thing, Charlie. Good night."

The chagrined newspaperman shambled from the booth. Pemberton and Kinzie were waiting in the car. He confided his wos to them in a low voice.

"Why, your boss is plumb right," commented the prospector. "Somebody is always hammering this country. They say we're all hot air and no principle. That's what's ailed the mining-business for years. A few fly-by-nights come in here and played the East for suckers, and now if you talk mine to a man from east of the Mississippi he runs like you was a mad dog and had your mouth open to bite him.

"This spider stuff is darn bad; but if we scare the women and children as bad as we got scared ourselves, who's any better off? Somebody has got to go out and clean them critters up, or they're going to clean us up. Besides, I want to relocate that claim of mine some day. Let's go over to the hotel and get a little sleep and then beat it back to Old Camp Cady. That German is a Wisenheimer; maybe he'll have something to suggest, soon's he gets his second wind."

It was a very long speech for the prospector. Pemberton approved his sentiments, and also commended the news editor in Los Angeles for his foresight and proffered aid.

"Not that we'll be likely to need it," he added, as the three entered the room at Mohave's hotel, "for old Bowen and Weston will put up enough to lick those spiders without any outside help, if money'll do it."

"Let's hope they're very miserly!" laughed Clark, his ebullient good humor already returning. "Fancy seeing a spider who weighs about as much as a young steer and would cover a parlor floor, propped up on his two-by-four legs, counting over the loose silver which somebody has slipped him, while yours truly drops salt on his tail and waits for it to prove fatal. Holy Moses! I'm glad the rest of you are sure you're alive—I think some one has me hypnotized."

"Let's hit the hay," growled Pemberton.

The others began disrobing. With mock solicitude, Clark thrust a stumpy broom beneath the bed. A daddy-long-legs ran across the floor. His heavy shoe caught it squarely.

"*Sic semper tyrannis!*" laughed the newspaperman. "First blood, as always, to the gallant reporter of the *News*. It's a good omen, fellows."

THEY reëntered Old Camp Cady a little before nine the following morning. The brilliant vivacity of the previous days had given way to a brooding terror. One by one various prospectors were streaming back from the desert.

The gold was forgotten in the profound sympathy which every man felt for Henry Bowen; and the terror that swooped down from the Kingston Range bred a repugnance unspeakable in the minds of the stalwart men around the camp.

Immediately the three were surrounded by inquisitors, each of whom volleyed rapid questions that allowed no time for a reply. Disregarding them, they made a quick trip to the hotel, where they learned that Ludwig Bauer was still under the influence of the sedative which Dr. Anderson had administered. The physician emphatically declared that it would be extremely dangerous to try to arouse him.

"Let him come out naturally," he insisted. "Otherwise the collapse of yesterday may be followed by coma—and death. The man's life hangs by a thread."

Imperative action, however, was needful—not only to avert the impending peril of prowling spiders, scattered by the storm, from Henry Bowen's family, but also to exterminate the insects if extermination were possible, and rescue the other members of the German's party.

Whereupon Henry Bowen, Pemberton, Kinzie and Clark held a hurried conference in the parlor of the hotel. From there they went directly to the veranda, where Pemberton raised an authoritative hand. The milling crowd grew silent as his clear, strong voice rang out over the assemblage.

"Men, we have decided that an expedition must leave Old Camp Cady as soon as supplies can be prepared, to fight off these monster spiders that threaten to devastate the Mohave Valley if they are not destroyed.

"I have no time to go into details of the hardships and perils we will likely be called

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upon to face. Aside from the dangers of the desert, these insects are of enormous size, cunning, ferocious and evidently more intelligent than any enemy you have ever met. The party will have to be limited. We must use many machines to convey supplies as well as men, and not one of us may live to come back.

"Again, all of us may return within forty-eight hours, happy in the knowledge that the spiders have been wiped out as suddenly as they appeared. We have decided to dynamite them, if we can not destroy them in any other way. I call for volunteers of men and autos. Henry Bowen authorizes me to say he will defray all expenses, and in case we are successful, will also allow each man who goes ten dollars a day."

A great cheer answered him. From the moment Pemberton ceased speaking, it was not a question of securing volunteers, but of eliminating those to go from the eager men who inundated the veranda with offers of assistance.

Within an hour twenty of the best automobiles in Old Camp Cady were trailing down the valley. Ten contained four men each, besides the driver, all armed with repeating rifles and revolvers. Ten others carried the explosives, food, water and reserve supplies of gas, besides stretchers, blankets and a tent for such refugees as might be picked up on the way.

Straight down the Barstow Trail they sped, their first objective being the point where Dr. Bauer had been found at the water-hole opposite the Three Buttes. From there, unless circumstances made it inadvisable, three of the autos were to continue on to the Summer home of Henry Bowen, perched in a knot of pines about thirty miles beyond the water-hole and seven from Barstow, from which it was separated by another spur of the Kingston Range.

By common consent Isaac Pemberton was in supreme command of the expedition, with Joe Kinzie as his lieutenant. Charlie Clark remained at Old Camp Cady, with another auto and two more volunteers, ready for a dash in the wake of the expedition later in the day.

"I'd go with you fellows," he replied to Pemberton's invitation, "but I've got a hunch that old German has a lot of stuff up his sleeve which we may find useful. He stopped kind of sudden last night, you'll remember, and the way his eyes looked, he had a few more reams of spider dope that he couldn't get out of his system. Now if anything goes wrong with you boys, or things don't pan out just as you figure, it'll be a lot better for some one back here to grab off any ideas the old fellow has and tote them in than to be stuck, perhaps, in there along with you."

"It's a good idea," approved Joe Kinzie, "but I can't figure where that German can give us anything better than giant powder to trim these varmints with. They'll need battleship armor to stand up against these steel-jacketed bullets in this here gun of mine, besides. What more can we take than we've got—no matter whether the old German ever wakes up or not?"

"If I knew, I wouldn't wait for him to wake up," grinned the reporter. "But I've just got a hunch that maybe these spiders ain't going to wait to be dynamited. Suppose they close in on you and get their boarders coming over the fore doors of those machines before you can start the fireworks? Then it'll be worse than Greek meeting Bulgar. This German gent is little and thin, and looks like some one had run him through a mangler with a corn-sheller attachment; but he may have one idea about this spider invasion that's worth all the giant powder ever manufactured. Anyhow, I'm going to wait and see."

## CHAPTER VII

### THE FIRST FIGHT

WITHOUT unusual incident the Pemberton punitive expedition reached the water-hole opposite the Three Buttes on the Barstow Trail. A careful survey of the desert with field-glasses in the direction of the Kingston Range failed to disclose any trace of the monstrous insects which Dr. Bauer had photographed.

As a precautionary measure against overheated motors, one of the party started toward the water-hole to provide fluid for the heavier machines on the trip out, should the need arise. The others held a brief council of war.

"Mr. Bowen, you and two other machines with men and two with dynamite better keep on to your place. If you discover any spiders send up some of these rockets," directed Pemberton, groping under

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the seat of his machine. "Three rockets mean danger, and no matter where we are we'll put back to your assistance. You'll find percussion-exploding caps separate from the dynamite.

"By running a machine at full speed past any of the insects, and hurling it, while the rest reserve their rifle or pistol fire so as not to prematurely discharge the explosive, you've got a good chance to give these spiders something to think about, if you should happen to run into any of them which the storm has blown farther down the trail.

"We'll make for the Three Buttes. From what I can see, there are plenty of bare spots that we ought to get through with the machines. Right behind the Buttes is a big cañon. By striking up that ravine we should come out somewhere near Larsen's mine, between there and the Colorado River. If we can't keep on with the machines, I'll go ahead with a scouting-party and see what conditions we'll have to meet. After your wife and daughter are safe, strike over for the mouth of the cañon and follow us. We may need your help."

He had hardly ceased speaking when a wild yell arose from the water-hole. Half a dozen men, headed by Joe Kinzie, ran in that direction. The water-bearer was frantically shrieking for assistance and striking with his canvas pails at a squat, grayish-black something, which was clinging tenaciously to one of his high-topped boots.

"Stand still!" roared Kinzie, flipping the butt of his rifle to his shoulder. The terrified man obeyed. Twilight was falling. The orange jet of fire from the prospector's rifle was followed by another rush in the man's direction. He was very pale and breathing heavily when they reached him.

The spider, about as large as the two pails he carried, was quivering on the sand. Kinzie's snap shot had penetrated its brain.

"Sho!" exclaimed one of the party. "You must have been more scared than hurt, man. Why didn't you beat it to death?"

For reply the fellow pointed to the bootleg. The crowd fell back in startled silence. The two mandibles of the dead insect were thrust clear through the tough cowhide which protected his leg; and when they removed the footgear, the punctures were clearly seen. Blood was streaming from them.

"It ain't a full-grown bird, or I miss my guess," gravely remarked Kinzie to Pemberton, as the injured man was aided back to the machine and the others went to bring the water. "If a baby could put up a fight like that, what will the grown-ups do, Ike?"

His friend silently bent over to examine the dead insect. In appearance it was exactly like the one in the photograph, except for size. Beneath the irregular-striped body was a half-grown shield of bony substance which rang when struck with a rifle barrel. Pemberton's face was very thoughtful as the machines again moved forward.

As he had foreseen, the wind which had piled the loose sand in great, soft hummocks and ridges in some places had swept others bare enough to admit of rapid although irregular progress. Several times they had to stop and shovel a path clear in order to keep on. In the thirty miles which intervened between them and the Three Buttes they were forced to détour so many times that the speedometers on the machines registered forty-five before the gaunt granite sentinels, guarding the cañon up which they were to go, loomed before them in the silence of the early morning.

"We'll wait for daylight, boys," announced the commander. "Joe, you and three men go ahead and mine the sand a couple of hundred yards in front of us, and lay a quick fuse back here, so we can anticipate a charge out of the cañon by the spiders if they take such a notion. Everybody else but Zack Marsh and Tom Malone can take a little sleep. We may need it bad enough before we get another chance."

The two sentries took up their places, front and rear. Malone was given instructions to watch for possible rocket signals from Bowen's party, and the other men slumbered in the machines till dawn.

After removing the dynamite barricade which had been erected, the party ate breakfast. Then Pemberton and Kinzie, with Pemberton's own car, stripped of all unnecessary weight, and armed with dynamite which had been fitted with percussion caps, drove forward to inspect the cañon's entrance behind the Three Buttes.

The rising ground at this point had been blown clean of sand by the winds which whirled around the base of the peaks. The coming sun shot its first beams down the great gorge, outlining clearly the uppermost

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volcanic rock until the burned sides, scarred by fires when the earth was young, smoldered in the growing light of a new day.

As they thrummed around the base of the southernmost butte, leading into the mouth of the cañon, both shouted. The cry was one of mingled amazement and fear—the hoarse ejaculation emanating involuntarily from the vocal organs of men whose conscious minds are intent upon something unbelievably strange, dreadful and ominous.

Across the great breach in the walls was a web like one in the picture which Dr. Bauer had brought back with him to Old Camp Cady. The radial filaments seemed as large as a man's thigh. With mathematical regularity they extended from each side angularly upward, from the middle portions of the rock outward toward the center, and from the top downward—a softly-swaying but impregnable barrier whose destruction must be accomplished ere a living thing could enter the cañon.

NOR was that all. Clinging in the center of the incredible piece of insect-engineering, its eight eyes glowing crimson in the half light of the morning, its eight legs spreading out along the strands of the marvelous obstacle which it had erected, hung a spider so ferociously formidable in appearance and so extraordinarily large that the hearts of the two men chilled at the mere vision.

With fiendish calm it awaited the approach of the motor. Pemberton, recovering from the half hypnosis of the apparition, described a wide circle, craning his neck back as if unable to resist the fascination of the angry, crimson eyes.

"The devil!" exploded Kinzie, steadying himself and facing the rear by kneeling on the seat of the machine, now headed back the way it had come. "Hold her steady for just a minute, Ike. Dog my cats if that there feller ain't telegraphing with that arrangement of his to his friends up the cañon. Now—hold her!"

The roar of his shot went echoing up the cañon in a succession of repeated bellows, as if the spider itself were vociferating its rage with a voice in keeping with its prodigious anatomical construction.

Kinzie, watching keenly for the effect of his fire, gave a hiss of surprise. He had purposely aimed at the heavy, bony covering of the creature's abdomen. His bullet, steel-jacketed as it was, went unerringly home, but the thud of the impact against the spider's protective covering was like the clang of a hammer on a drill.

The next instant the web trembled and a filament of feathery white whipped down the entrance toward them, traveling with incredible speed, considering that it was being manufactured and projected simultaneously.

Kinzie dropped his rifle with a string of venomous curses that would have frightened an Apache Indian back to the reservation after he had taken to the warpath. He seized a stick of dynamite and rushed madly up the gravel-strewn entrance, heedless of the viscous, snaky, fresh-spun webs which came hissing down with such prodigious velocity in their direction. The monster seemed as inexhaustible as it was huge.

Pemberton, jerking the machine to a standstill, grasped the fallen rifle and pumped bullet after bullet up through the mass of sticky, grayish-white silk, floating out to engulf the daring miner whose poised arm held the dynamite aloft as he ran on.

Like reptiles whose habitat is the air the writhing, swirling webs, slender but deadly strong, were shot forth by the sentinel spider with a composure which seemed to deride the efforts of the two human beings who were opposing him with the most effective personal weapons which the cunning of man had been able to devise since first his evolution began.

Then a roar which shook the eternal rocks of the great gully rang out as the dynamite ricochetted from the protective armor of the insect. Pemberton saw—ere the whirling spiral of nitrogen filled the neck of the gorge with fragments of rock and clouds of smoke and dust—his partner, Joe Kinzie, dodge nimbly to one side and throw himself behind the base of the rock to which the great web had been anchored on the right.

## CHAPTER VIII

### "OUR TRUMP CARD, GENTLEMEN!"

DR. ANDERSON entered the parlor of the hotel at Old Camp Cady and crossed to where Charlie Clark, live wire for the Los Angeles *News*, was fingering the spider photographs with a curious, intent look upon his face.

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"Well, he's awake," the doctor announced.

Clark hurled himself toward the door.

"Not so fast, my dear boy!" said the physician. "Give the poor devil a chance, will you?"

"Why?" snapped the reporter.

His dreamy look had vanished. The fire in his eyes signified the stimulus the news had given him. It was nearly sundown, and Clark was tingling to his fingertips with repressed eagerness to confirm or disprove his theory. It was for this identical moment he had waited, stifling his wild desire to go on with the Pemberton expedition and personally verify the marvelous story of the German scientist.

"I left him sitting up in bed after a good bracer of brandy and milk," replied the doctor without relaxing his grip on the reporter's elbow. "As soon as he's finished the light breakfast I've sent him—a little gruel, a poached egg and half a cup of weak coffee—I'll take you in."

Clark reseated himself and thrust the photographs impatiently into a package, which he tied with a jerk.

"What's the matter with you, kid?" Dr. Anderson's tone was flippant. "Don't you know the first duty of a physician is toward his patient?"

"Oh, yes—just as well as I know that medicine is half hunk!" retorted the disgruntled reporter. "Beg pardon, Doc," he swiftly apologized. "I appreciate your precautions. But you don't seem to get the idea, somehow!"

"What idea?"

"What do you think I lagged back here in Old Camp Cady for?" The reporter's asperity was returning. "I want to be in where those devilish things are, as bad as the rest of them. You can guess how bad, when I tell you that Miss Bowen and I have been engaged for two years, but I haven't had the nerve to brace her old man since he made his big strike in Mohave Consolidated."

Anderson gave a whistle of incredulity.

"Fact!" snapped Clark. "But I want to be sure of being able to do something for my fiancée, old top, instead of merely getting myself into a box. Look at this picture. Can you count the spiders roosting back in the mouth of that cave?"

"Not unless you quit waving it as if you thought it was the bloody shirt and you were a veteran of the Lost Cause," laughed the physician, reaching for the print.

He studied it for some time without raising his eyes. Then he handed it back.

"There's ten thousand if there's one," he gravely admitted. "It would take a panorama camera to take them all in."

"And this was a telephoto lens on a film four and a half by five and a half," swiftly replied the newspaperman. "Doc, there must be a million spiders back in that cave. How are twenty or fifty men to whip them? Why, half of Los Angeles couldn't do it, with all the powder on the Pacific Coast—even if they could keep out of each other's way and only demolish spiders instead of blowing up each other. Lead me to that German or I'll have a fit. I've got to find out something."

DR. BAUER'S slender, emaciated, medium-sized figure looked almost childlike as he put out a hand to Clark from the bed where he had been sleeping. Leaning against the pillows, his eager eyes devoured the impassive features of the newspaperman.

"Well, they've gone in to rout out the spiders," truculently began Clark, although the anxiety far down in his eyes belied his belligerent tone.

"*What?*"

The German's face paled. He threw up his hands with a gesture of despair.

"Bowen, Pemberton, Kinzie and about forty others left this morning with powder enough to blow up the Kingston Range," remorselessly went on the speaker, watching the effect of his words. "I remained to have a talk with you."

Bauer leaned against his pillows with features twitching. He recovered himself with an effort and sat bolt upright.

"They are all mad!" he gasped. "Send after them, quickly! No men can cope with those enormous and ferocious insects; no, not even the standing army could hope to rout them from the mountain, unless——"

He broke off, feebly waving his hands, as if divining the utter futility of his protest.

"You've got to show me, Doc," brutally retorted Clark. "Why can't they demolish the spiders with powder? Are the things bullet-proof?"

"What is the name of this place?" replied the German, sliding one foot out of bed and throwing back the coverings with an energy

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that was unexpected. "Where are my clothes?" he shrilled, without waiting for an answer to his first question.

"You are in Old Camp Cady. Best place to get a railroad is Mohave and from there it is about a hundred and five miles to Los Angeles, California."

Clark's voice had a quiet calmness in strong contrast to his trembling hands.

"I must get to Los Angeles at once!" replied Dr. Bauer.

"Why?"

"I will tell you on the way to this Mohave you mention. Have you a conveyance?"

"Auto."

"All right. My clothes, please."

Fresh garments were brought him by the landlord, and in ten minutes Dr. Anderson, Clark and the German were whirling up the road.

"My friends," began the rescued scientist, "have either of you ever read Fabre's 'Life of the Spider'?"

"Nix," laughed Clark as Anderson shook his head.

"Maeterlinck—you know him; the Belgian poet and philosopher—wrote an introduction to that work," went on the German, in tense tones. "I can only quote what he said from memory, so if I err you will overlook it. Maeterlinck says: 'They seem to come from some comet which has lost its way and died, demented, in space, or from some other planet which develops life more monstrous, more energetic, more insane, more atrocious and more infernal than our own.

" 'They cause an instinctive and profound uneasiness, inspired by those existences incomparably better armed, better equipped to fight, than our own—by those creatures made up of a sort of compressed energy and activity in whom we suspect our most mysterious adversaries, our rivals and perhaps, *our ultimate successors!*' "

"Just what are we to understand by that, Dr. Bauer?" asked the reporter.

"I think that Maeterlinck, poet and prophet that he is, undoubtedly foresaw a time when spiders would contest with man for domination of the earth—that he regarded them as the ultimate inheritors of the planet!"

Clark did not reply, and only Anderson's eyes showed his amazement.

"However," went on the German, "that does not justify us in taking it for granted that the time is yet here—even if we are disposed to admit the prophecy of the poet-philosopher or the fable of the Pundits of India. Their ancient wisdom declares 'Everything in the world came from the belly of a spider, and all shall return thereto!'

"We know that spiders of enormous size are in our vicinity. My own observations, although made while in extraordinary peril, incline me to the belief that these are a cross between the *Lycosidae* and the *Mygale*. One photograph I made, for instance, shows a female tearing off her unfortunate lover's legs. That trait is common to the *Lycosidae*.

"The *Mygale Hentzii*, in their usual size, are known to inhabit Texas and Arizona. The mine which I was examining was only a few miles from the Arizona line, across the Colorado River. This common variety has long been extolled by scientific writers as possessing the highest degree of insect-intelligence, and it also lives underground."

"That sounds very probable, Professor."

Dr. Anderson's remark showed that the listening men were following the statements closely.

"My first idea is confirmed regarding the *Mygale* by several other characteristics which those photographs show," went on the German. "They have eight eyes, all simple. In one picture, the spider which has Lars Larsen under his fangs is looking with all eight eyes directly up into my camera. Bear in mind, also, the seven-jointed legs, eight in number, on the feet of which are claws, retractile, like a cat's."

"They sure are. I saw 'em," affirmed Clark. "But Dr. Bauer, how did these things come to grow to such an awful size?"

"I can only advance a theory. You will remember that I came to Larsen's mine, seeking uranium ores for my company. It was the blast which uncovered the spiders. I do not know whether or not they had entrances out to the hillsides and ravines in the vicinity. I know only that they swarmed out as soon as Larsen and the others went into that cavern, and that they afterward tried to block my exit through the cañon, when I fled to the desert.

"But they must have lived in close proximity to the uranium ores, which are unquestionably radio-active. My laboratory tests in Berlin demonstrated that; otherwise I should not have visited America at all. A

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German colleague of mine, Dr. Gottlieb Schwartz, at a convention of men interested in radium research in Berlin a few months before I left there, told of experiments which he had made on frogs. By subjecting their embryonic cells to radium influence he had succeeded in breeding frogs to an enormous size.

"It seems reasonable, therefore, with his experience as a guide, to infer that these spiders, all of whom propagate and renew their tribes by eggs, may have undergone similar changes in cell-structure; hence their size."

The clear-cut, meaty statement was so convincing that Dr. Bauer's next words were awaited with an eagerness equaled only by the fear which his remarkable announcement had induced.

"Gentlemen, ordinary weapons are inadequate against these spiders for two reasons: They are prodigious in size, and, regardless of what you may at present believe, equipped with an intelligence that compares favorably with our own. I am stating the bald facts conservatively.

"Second, they are practically numberless. They know nothing of such emotions as those which actuate humanity—pity, love, kindliness, nor particularly fear—as we understand the words. Our contest with them, therefore, is a battle to the death. But, like everything else that has ever been created, they have their vulnerable points. The one most likely to help us is—parasites!"

"Parasites?" incredulously repeated Clark.

"Our trump card, gentlemen," grimly replied the scientist. "Creatures so small that they must be magnified nine hundred times to become visible to the human eye; yet more deadly than a machine-gun, because no spider ever hatched, of these species especially, can hope to resist their attack or elude their pursuit."

Clark's face was strained and drawn, but his voice was firm as he put another query.

"What kind of germs will you use, Professor? And how long does it take 'em to put over the knock-out haymaker?"

"The *staphylococcus pyogenes annihilatus*," replied the German. "It is related to the *staphylococcus pyogenes albus* and the *staphylococcus pyogenes aureus*. The last two are respectively pure white and golden in coloration; the *annihilatus* is neutral in color."

"All right; all right. But where does Mr. Annihilatus hang out, and how speedy is he in the ring? That's what I want to know."

"Very frequently in decomposed animal matter. Scientifically speaking, he follows the repulsive maggots, devouring them after they have finished their work. Once infected, a spider will invariably die within two hours."

Clark's face was glowing.

"Here's Mohave!" he cried, as the machine breasted a knoll and drew up alongside a railroad station.

## CHAPTER IX

### DYNAMITE

BEFORE the echoes of the explosion had died away Joe Kinzie struggled to his feet, wiping the dust from his eyes.

"We've got the granddaddy of 'em, anyhow!" he yelled to Pemberton, who came running from the car, carrying more dynamite.

The prospector pointed to the shattered remains of the still quivering spider which, a moment before, had clung in confident strength to the silken mat stretched across the rocky mouth of the ravine. Fragments of the great web, torn and wrecked by the blast, yet swung in the breeze and lay strewn over the ground below.

The sentinel spider lay dismembered and innocuous. Nevertheless a baleful glare of indomitable hatred gleamed from three of its eight eyes as Pemberton stooped to examine it, showing that life and intelligence left it reluctantly.

Roused by rifle-shots and the boom of the blast, other autos were racing around the corner of the southernmost butte, their occupants pale-faced and anxious-eyed.

"Wait there!" shouted Ike Pemberton, as he and Kinzie began dragging the mass of web-fragments and the dead spider to one side of the rocks. This done, Pemberton returned to his car, while Kinzie reloaded his rifle, gazing curiously at the bony abdomen of the extinct sentinel. The first bullet had struck one of the slight, transverse ridges, and flattened. Its powerful trajectory had sufficed only to carry the missile slightly beneath the front shell, where it still remained fastened. The bullets fired by Pemberton had done no greater damage.

When Pemberton's car had negotiated

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the entrance, he stopped to study the defile ahead with field-glasses. A quarter of a mile farther on it widened noticeably. The portion within range of his vision was destitute of any signs of insect life, and none were visible along its steep, rocky sides.

The commander of the expedition walked back to the waiting machines. Kinzie's half-jesting remark about the "wireless telegraph" at the cañon's entrance troubled him. Spiders were acutely intelligent, as he well knew. If they had increased their intellectual powers in proportion to the growth of their bodies, what was to hinder them from employing some subtle, although incomprehensible, method of transmitting warnings over distances?

Although the idea might be a preposterous one, Pemberton nevertheless determined to proceed with caution while traversing the cañon—the only practicable way by which they could reach the vicinity of the Larsen mine with their automobiles.

"You boys keep a couple of hundred feet apart," he directed after rejoining his men. "Go mighty easy with those machines over this rough ground—we can't take a chance of exploding our dynamite. Let the supply-machines keep to the rear anyhow, in case a bunch of those spiders make a rush down the ravine. Better get some short time-fuses on those percussion caps, in case we want to plant a few sticks while we retreat and draw them on."

"What are we going to do if they charge?" demanded Zack Marsh.

"At distance, rifle-fire—but you've got to hit 'em in the heads or legs to disable 'em. Shoot straight and keep cool. This cañon ain't a nice place to look for trouble, but it's the only road."

The machines were forced to go slowly once they were well inside the great slash in the mountain. The ground rose steadily and was covered with the débris of many a cloudburst. Gravel, sand, occasional uprooted trees and now and then a great boulder added to the difficulty.

They were about five miles in from the cañon-entrance when Pemberton ordered a halt for breakfast. As before, Kinzie and he walked on ahead, searching for traces of the stupendously hideous insects they had come to fight. So far, with the exception of the young one at the water-hole and the sentinel at the mouth of the cañon, there had been no sign whatever of spiders, large or small.

"How's that feller's leg that got bit last night?" asked Joe.

"They rubbed it with alkali and water, so Ben Watson told me, and, aside from its being pretty sore and stiff, he's all right. He wants to fight spiders worse than any man in the bunch."

"Not any worse than I do!" retorted Kinzie sturdily. "I've got my claim to think about. What chance would I have had if it wasn't for that sand-storm? Remember how I was cussin' my luck on the way back to Old Camp Cady?"

"Yes."

"I feel like a plumb idjit, ever since that German waked up. That sand-storm wasn't any misfortune; it was the best thing that's happened to me—outside of locating that dry-wash glory-hole of mine—in fifteen years. When we get these fellers all cleaned out I hope you won't get cold feet, pardner."

Pemberton did not reply. He was scanning the cañon-walls for some place that would enable them to climb to the lofty cliffs above. A little farther on it looked feasible.

"Wait here, Joe," he commanded, swinging himself upward. In ten minutes he had reached the top and was surveying the gorge intently with his binoculars.

He came tumbling down with a precipitancy that savored of carelessness. His usually clean-cut, ruddy face was pinched and pale. His somber eyes reflected the anxiety brooding in Kinzie's.

"We've got our work cut out for us," he remarked, hurrying back down the cañon at a run. "Joe, that German's camera wasn't lying. There's more than a thousand spiders coming down this ravine, not five miles from here, marching like Roman soldiers; and every mother's son of them is as big as the one we killed. Hurry!"

The mad rush of the expedition's leaders down the gorge was the signal for the meal's end. Pemberton's voice rang clearly as he issued his orders.

"Into the machines—quick!"

He drove up the path down which he had just retreated, with spark and gas levers set to the maximum of their power. He stopped a scant half mile beyond the point where he had climbed to the top of the ravine, and under his direction, a row of

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dynamite sticks were planted thickly across the cañon.

"Get the water cans and the grub and all the supplies up the cliffs back there," he ordered. "Zack, you and ten men go ahead to that little rise, and see what you can do to stand off the advance-guard of those fellows with long-range rifle-fire. Joe, you carry a couple of ropes to the summit and hoist up the supplies with Watson and Tom Malone. The rest of you fellows get to the top of the rocks, and be ready to cover our retreat."

"How far up the cañon are they?" asked a man.

"They were five miles, about, when I looked," hurriedly answered Pemberton, "and coming this way as fast as a horse can trot, as near as I could judge."

Aided by two men, the last machine was turned around in the narrow gorge until it faced back down the pass. Walter Whipple, who had been driving it, received his instructions from Pemberton.

"Back to Old Camp Cady as fast as you can go and tell the boys we'll need a thousand men instead of fifty to whip these spiders. Beat it—quick! Watch out for the entrance—I'm half afraid that they may have sent a detachment over the hills to cut us off."

THE ridiculous character of Pemberton's remark evoked no comment from the driver of the machine. Absurd as it was, judging from any experience of the past, it took on a new and sinister significance in view of the uncanny occurrence of the morning at the cañon's entrance. The sputtering motor of the relief-machine mingled its volleys with the first scattering rifle-fire from the men under orders from Zack Marsh, as Pemberton started to rejoin them.

The eleven who had been selected to stem the first rush of the gigantic spiders were stretched across the cañon in skirmish formation. Two hundred yards in front, when Pemberton had reached the place with another rifle which he had grasped while running, the narrow defile was filled with a mass of steadily moving insects.

From each rocky wall toward the center they extended in a solid mass, supremely horrifying, incredibly diabolical in their unwavering approach. It was a sight so ghastly that even the boldest of the little knot of skirmishers was appalled. Shot after shot reverberated through the narrow defile, now oppressively close with the more direct rays of the pitiless sun. Ball after ball went hurtling through brains or bodies of the infernal insect-army, yet the effect was much as if a man were trying to dip Niagara dry with a spoon.

Writhing, quivering, tossing convulsively, the dead and mangled spiders were trodden under foot by the nefariously certain onmarch of the host pressing behind. Ferocity implacable, purpose relentless, was in the unwavering glare of the Satanic eyes of the thousands of spiders which poured down the gorge. It was like a volcano, long extinct, whose eruption had come without warning—only every molecule of white-hot lava shooting resistlessly up from the bowels of the earth now possessed intelligence, walked on eight legs, had eight eyes and carried javelin-like weapons which a legionary of ancient Rome would not have scorned.

At Pemberton's quick command the eleven men retreated past the fringe of dynamite, heedless of the peril of accidentally exploding it, mindful only of the more deadly menace behind. As Pemberton stopped to light the fuses, a gigantic spider galloped clumsily on its eight legs around the bend, throwing out a filament of web as deftly as a Mexican cowboy in pursuit of a straying maverick.

Although conscious of the proximity of his peril, Pemberton stooped resolutely and applied the flame to the short fuse just as the silken snare spun over his head with a "swish." Another and another stick he lit, each time evading the new snares sent hurtling after him by a dexterity which appeared miraculous.

The spider was coming backward now, his spinnerets pointed toward the young capitalist, who had lighted his last fuse and was now leaping madly down the hundred yards to the point where the others had climbed the walls, running in a way to shame the record-holders of any cinder-path.

Simultaneously a roar broke out from overhead and the pursuing spider collapsed. Joe Kinzie's grim face wore a transitory smile as he jacked a fresh cartridge into the barrel of his weapon and strode back along the cliff's edge to extend a helping hand to his "one-day partner."

"Joe," gasped Pemberton, as he knelt at

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the summit, breathing heavily, "you asked me a question a few minutes ago and I was too busy thinking to answer it then. The answer is, 'Yes, when we've cleaned 'em up'!"

Kinzie's smile was good to look upon. Then it faded as he squinted along his rifle-barrel and another spider threshed down to the floor of the cañon below. It had been half way up the ascent when the prospector had fired.

A second afterward a series of shocks rocked the great granite cliff on which they were standing. The mine, now well covered with the advancing spider-horde, had exploded. Fragments of arms, legs, eyes, waving webs, were hurled high above the edge of their place of refuge. As the cloud of dust settled down, revealing the great gash torn in the earth, the balance of the insect army was scurrying up and down the cañon.

"Shucks!" laughed Zack Marsh. "There ain't more'n five thousand of them critters, anyway. Two more charges of giant powder and they'll beat it back for their cave."

But his levity was ill timed. The spiders retreated only to a point where they could not be reached by dynamite. Those below the imprisoned rescue-party went scurrying down the ravine, while those between them and the cave began resolutely climbing up the cliffs, reaching with their eight legs for crevices which no man could have relied upon, and even utilizing their webs to afford them a more secure foothold as they clambered stoically toward the rocky heights where their prey was now immured.

## CHAPTER X

### A NEW WEAPON

THE ensuing dogged, relentless attack by thousands of incredibly huge insects would have hypnotized every man upon the cañon-walls, but for one fact.

Each man there realized the virulent menace of speedy tragedy creeping up, up, up.

Each had heard, either from the lips of Dr. Ludwig Bauer, or from some narrator whose description lost little in repeating, the story of the unexpected appearance of these terrifying intruders, welling up so mysteriously from the concealment of the mountain-cavern whose walls had been torn apart by the exploratory blast of the German scientist and his party. The frightful fate of Lars Larsen would be the common end of all, if that steady, ruthless, up-climbing horde could not be beaten back.

Pemberton and Kinzie rushed from point to point over the uneven summit of their rocky refuge, admonishing, cautioning, guiding the little knot of defenders.

"Hold yer fire, boys!" sang out the prospector. "Shoot only at their heads! Act as if all the yellow perils in Japan was climbing this here gorge! This is worse than them'll ever be. Pick out an eye and score a bull's eye every time ye pull trigger! Odds are with us—eight to one all the way! Remember, we're helpless in the grip of the powder trust, and cartridges come high."

Volley after volley, then skirmish firing; now and again a stick of dynamite fitted with a percussion cap and hurled with good effect by Pemberton or Zack Marsh often repelled what would otherwise certainly have become a successful effort of the hideous creatures to gain a foothold upon the narrow plateau.

Such a catastrophe was narrowly averted almost at the outset of the fearful struggle. A crafty spider, shielding itself as it climbed beneath a projection which overhung the cliff, as well as covering its advance by those insects on each side whose more exposed position diverted attention from it, suddenly shot one of its huge tentacles over the edge of the plateau immediately in front of old "Pop" Hayden, who was picking off spiders as big as hogsheads where he had once repelled Apaches in this very cañon.

The amazed Indian-fighter stuck his rifle's muzzle against the very head of the horrible thing, pumped frantically and pulled the trigger. Only the click of his hammer followed. He had fired his last shell and there was no time to insert another. The repugnant creature whisked the weapon from his grasp and lumbered forward, darting its fangs at his throat.

"Pop" Hayden stood not upon the order of his going. He went backward—and, luckily for him, inward; prostrate, then on all fours, scrambling, pawing, writhing along the rocky summit, involuntarily using muscles hitherto unknown to any gymnast in the world, to escape the unutterably revolting thing in pursuit.

It was a bullet from Zack Marsh which

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sent the brain-tissue of that particular spider spattering along the stones, and another shot in the same direction tumbled the spider just behind the first backward over the cliff.

A charge of dynamite cleaned out the clambering horde massed along the overhanging rock right below in single file; then the two dead bodies were pushed over the edge, landing with a mushy crash on still others, avidly waiting their turn to ascend the same path.

"Goshalmighty!" sputtered the old Indian-fighter, as his trembling fingers shoved fresh shells into the magazine of his recovered rifle. "Fer a minute I was wishin' them braves under old Cochise had give me the 'Pache razzle-dazzle twenty year ago, 'stid o' sneakin' off when Miles's men come clatterin' up this here cañon."

Pemberton made another quick trip around the summit. Under his direction the men rolled such boulders as were available to the edge of the cliff, and from time to time tumbled these down upon the insistent attackers, to conserve their ammunition.

It worked well until the spiders began attacking in many places simultaneously; then it would again become a question of gunpowder and careful shooting for another breathless interval, until the new assailants could be killed off.

The hot sun streamed down with its noonday intensity, as if leagued with the devilish creatures.

But in spite of all the defenders could do, they had barely time for an occasional hurried swallow from a canteen. Rest and food were forgotten. From time to time Pemberton, with a sinking heart, had broken open the fresh boxes of cartridges which he had providentially thought to bring with them.

In very truth their assailants appeared as innumerable as at the beginning, despite the hundreds of obviously dead bodies strewn along the bottom of the cañon, whose nauseating odor was now added to the other trials of the battle. The heavy air seemed to sag indolently between the cañon's walls, yet not so weightily that the horrid odor could not waft high enough to reach the gasping, perspiring, powder-grimed men above.

Pemberton knew that unless some happy inspiration could come to their aid it was inevitable, in view of the numberless, implacable horde, that they would be finally overwhelmed by sheer force of those still arriving.

Once in a while he turned his gaze to the south, wondering what had become of Whipple. The last trace of that courier had been the faint, far-off thrum of his motor as he whirled down the cañon, carrying the message that the would-be annihilators were themselves in danger of being wiped out.

THE commander chilled as his gaze fell on a half dozen cans of gasoline standing in the center of their place of refuge.

"I never thought to furnish him with more gas," he groaned to himself. "But I'll have to hide that fact—the boys would all jump down in another hour and fight hand to claw on the cañon floor.

"Who would have believed that such a peril could boil up in the heart of a sterile country like this? And we have barely five hundred cartridges left, while there must be a million more of those eight-legged imps of hell more determined than ever to clean us up! Good Lord! Why *didn't* I think to give Whipple some fresh gas? He's our only hope, when these shells are all gone."

Joe Kinzie hurried over, mopping his streaming forehead with a shirtsleeve already drenched with perspiration and caked with dust and powder-smoke.

"Well, pardner," he growled, so low that none of the others heard his words, "I'm pretty near ready to sell that there claim of mine fer absolution fer my many sins. What are we goin' to do when these cartridges give out—tickle them to death with funny stories when they swarm over the edge and hand us eight visitin' cards to oncet?"

Despite the flippancy of his banter, Pemberton knew that Joe Kinzie was beginning to feel symptoms of the same cold, curdling doubt which had already torn him.

Suddenly Kinzie pointed toward the reserve cans of gasoline.

"Pardner, there's a lot of stuff we can't none of us drink right away."

"I wish to Heaven," impulsively groaned Pemberton, "that Whipple had some of it! Joe, I'm almost ready to surrender my option on half that claim of yours—I sent that fellow away without ever looking in his

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tank to see if he had enough gas to even last him to the Barstow Trail!"

Kinzie grinned.

"Well, now, pardner, I hain't so used to them buzz buggies myself that I can tell when they are outfitted the way they oughter be, seein's I use mostly burros to pack my corn-meal and bacon out and my nuggets in. But I never heard of a burro that could git along without a drink oncet in a while, did you?"

"No. That's where I crabbed the whole game, Joe!"

"Sho! Well, you had quite some smart thinkin' to do, pardner." Kinzie's grimace was a wry one. "It jest so happened that I peeked into that there tank o' Whipple's and sot a couple of cans inside his machine before I h'isted the others up here. But—fergit that, fer a minute!"

Pemberton was so relieved that he could hardly comprehend the next words of the rugged, indomitable figure whose features were projected close to his own.

"What I'm thinkin' about," went on the prospector, "is how condemned thirsty them there friends of ourn is gittin' down in that cañon. What d'ye say we mix 'em up a drink, hey?"

Pemberton's ghastly face relaxed at the sheer whimsicalness of his partner's suggestion.

"Them there critters hez been out fer quite some spell now, I reckon," went on Kinzie.

The prospector dropped his rifle and shuffled to the nearest can.

"Come from hell-fire, drink hell-fire—hey, pardner?"

He rolled one of the containers to the edge of the cliff and unscrewed the cover. As he balanced it preparatory to launching it over into space, Pemberton, still half dazed from the glad news that Whipple might yet get through to Old Camp Cady and bring help, could not divine his purpose.

"Wait, Joe! We may need that stuff going out!" he exclaimed.

"Pardner," gravely replied the other, "if we ever *do* get a chanct to start, I'm willin' to walk back to Old Camp Cady, usin' the bridge of my nose and my two big toenails fer feet. No, pardner, we can't afford to let them friends of ours go without a drink another minute!"

He carefully soaked his coat in the fluid and tipped the can over the edge; it fell to the bottom, rebounded and fell on its side, the gasoline jetting from the wreck, with a horde of oncoming spiders rushing madly toward it.

Kinzie's grin, for joyous diabolism, was on a par with the Satanic grimaces of the spiders as they thrust their fore feet into the volatile liquid.

Then, with a flick of a match along his trousers, Joe ignited his coat and flung it right down on the still spouting gasoline-container.

A roaring sheet of flame swept up the gorge. Every spider on that side of the precipice was either incinerated or so badly burned that it scurried away. The prospector turned to his friend.

"Guess I'll pay fer that absolution at Old Camp Cady rates, pardner, and if you'll come across with the makin's, I'll jest whiff a sure-enough cigarette till hell sends out its next brigade. Do you know it's half past four o'clock?"

## CHAPTER XI

### "A BOLT FROM THE BLUE"

"WHAT was that?"

Joe Kinzie's voice was subdued and lacked resonance, while the arm with which he pointed toward the edge of the peaks that were silhouetted against the glow of departing day trembled with weariness.

Never before in all the wild, tragic history of the great Southwest had human beings endured such a day of alternate suspense, deadly peril and desperate conflict with enemies whose ferocity and endurance seemed supernatural.

Night was dropping around the men ensconced upon the barren fringe of rocks along the pass up which they had come that morning. They were utterly overcome with the fatigue of their heroic struggle. Desperate and oft-renewed charges of their insect enemies, from dozens of points along their precarious shelter, had tested their hardihood to the very limit of human endurance.

There were less than fifty cartridges and only six sticks of dynamite remaining in the party; the plateau was bare of rocks and the smaller boulders which had covered it. Every can of gasoline had likewise been

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burned. All of these had been hurled down upon the demoniacal insects whose unflagging persistence and sheer vindictive courage had no parallel in the history of the world.

Now, with the approach of night, the defenders of the plateau were granted a little respite; but on every side was a circle of red, glaring eyes—eyes whose sleepless malevolence was unremitting. The stoutest heart of the most experienced man on that hill-top grew cold at the thought of the morrow.

Many of them were long-time residents of the Southwest. More than a few had faced the whirlwind attacks of Apaches or battled desperately with white outlaws in the days when a man's weapon was his only life-insurance.

As they threw themselves, exhausted, prone upon the summit of their refuge, after the last precious water had been impartially distributed, all were agreed that another such day would see them fall victims to the furious and unabated rage of the gigantic spiders.

Pemberton himself, as he reviewed the events of the day, was more perturbed than he permitted the others to see. They had come up to the Kingston Range to battle with a score or at most a few hundred spiders.

They had been confronted with thousands where they had expected dozens. Zack Marsh had voiced the unanimous opinion of the besieged men in one lull of the battle when he exclaimed:

"Ike, that there cave Doc Bauer told us about must lead straight down to the devil's own hole; and when he calls up his reserves, what chance has anybody got in this God-forsaken country?"

The most sinister reflection which Pemberton found obtruding itself upon his thoughts was the fact that until now they had faced only the larger spiders of the male species. He was not well versed in knowledge of insects, but his surmise, gleaned from the uniformity of appearance among their enemies, filled him with a vague foreboding as to the future. The cave must contain females and many young insects, all in various stages of development. And these must be reckoned with, as well.

Even should the defenders ultimately succeed in escaping alive from their hastily selected position, they must make their way down the cañon on foot, and thence, parched with thirst, hazard the dreadful journey across the sands to the Barstow Trail. The autos were overturned in the gorge below, the tires torn from the wheels, where the spiders had vengefully assailed the machines when the owners had battled for life with others of the clambering hordes.

Ike's one hope was Walter Whipple. If he had succeeded in getting through, there might be something to look forward to, provided reënforcements should come up from Old Camp Cady before daybreak. It was on this slender probability that he had been speculating when Joe Kinzie repeated his question, again pointing to the west.

PEMPERTON staggered to his feet. His limbs were so inert that he rose with difficulty. Stiff and sore, aching in every bone and sinew, torn with anxiety, he rather welcomed the prospector's query.

The moon was rising rapidly. The planet's calm, clear light was silvering the tops of the harsh peaks, transforming their outlines with the witchery that only moonlight gives.

"Which way, Joe?"

"Right over yonder, ag'in' the Three Buttes. I sure seen something—something different than I ever seen before, too. Looked like a big bat, only bigger than any bat I ever heard of. But if spiders grow bigger than automobiles, why shouldn't bats grow big enough for a man to see 'em ten miles away, pardner?"

Pemberton essayed a smile as he pulled his binoculars from their case and set the focus of the night-glass. He scanned the entire horizon to the west but saw nothing.

"Guess you're beginning to see things, Joe," he wearily remarked, starting to replace the glasses. "But I don't blame you much. If an elephant was to come flying up out of the bottom of that cañon to get away from those devilish spiders, I'd never bat an eye, myself."

"Give me them glasses!" retorted the miner. "Whatever it was, Ike, it's behind the middle of the Three Buttes, right now. Mebbe it'll come out again."

Pemberton relinquished the binoculars without a word. He strolled over to where one of his men was moaning on the ground. Despite their stout resistance to the unremitting assaults of the day, the little command had not gone unscathed. Perry

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Martin lay limp and inert, with glassy eyes staring straight up toward the unfeeling stars, suffering from a ghastly wound in the left breast where the mandibles of a great spider had stabbed him. The wound was not deep, but something besides the cut itself had sapped Martin's strength. Despite liberal dosing with brandy, he had grown unconscious and apparently paralyzed. Only the faint rise and fall of his chest and an occasional weak moan signified that he was yet alive. He had not moved hand or foot for three hours.

Yet nothing could be done to aid him, unless, by some miracle, help would come. And this, Pemberton knew, would be most improbable before dawn found them again battling with the uncanny, stupendous monsters, who challenged the right of the human race to dispute their occupancy of the Kingston Range—and of the world itself, perhaps. He shuddered as the idea leaped into his dulled brain.

Had it not been for the circle of implacable, crimson eyes, Pemberton might have believed the whole thing some ghastly vision of a fevered brain—a fantasy of an imagination so disordered that the realities of life had vanished, and only the terrifying monsters of a delirium succeeded the routine of ordinary existence.

But there was no escaping the malignancy of those countless fiery eyes, upturned toward the plateau. No superstition of the past, no nightmare of the present, could have produced eyes of more picturesque brutality—eyes whose glare seemed to poison the very space between the spiders and the hemmed-in men. There was something awful in their unwavering challenge. They were the horrid, devilish eyes of some beings in whom all emotions except vengeful intelligence had been extinguished. Only the perversions of impish ferocity, bred of hell itself, could serve as a basis of comparison for the undying hatred of that ghoulish gaze from the huddled mass encompassing them.

"Ike! Ike!"

Joe Kinzie's ringing call thrilled Pemberton with a new alarm. More than once his partner had distinguished himself in the battle of the day. What fresh menace had he stumbled upon now, hatched by the crafty, subtle, imperturbably brooding creatures below?

"Look, Ike! There's my bat—only it ain't a bat, unless I've got the rams! But what the devil is it? It's coming straight over the hills, and a-buzzin' and a-buzzin'! Listen, pardner—can't you hear the thing?"

Pemberton grasped the extended binoculars. He whipped them to his eyes with a thrill, half of apprehension, half of hope. In the first confused moment he found his benumbed brain grappling wildly with a new spasm of despair. Joe had spoken of the web at the cañon's entrance looking like a wireless telegraph station, and in some inexplicable manner the whole spider-army had been warned and marshaled to meet the invaders that very morning.

The relentless cordon by which they were surrounded had been waiting for something —but what? Could it be that these dreadful enemies of theirs had still other powers and capacities — some malign intelligence which would enable them to reach the plateau upon which the exhausted men were doggedly awaiting the coming of a new day, and the end?

Nothing seemed fantastic or improbable to Isaac Pemberton as his anxious eyes tried to pick up the fluttering atom of mystery which was skimming across the space between their refuge and the Three Buttes to the west.

Then, into the star-flecked circle of the glass leaped a rectangular object, swaying, dipping, yet progressing at an amazing speed. The shimmer of the wondrous moonlight shone full upon its gleaming whiteness as it sagged earthward, throwing into full relief at the next instant the shadowy specks of two heads—human heads—while behind, in a buzz that was growing to a roar, was the thing which propelled them across through the night.

"JOE, you don't want to stick around the desert too much after we get out of here," grinned Pemberton. "That's an aeroplane headed our way, and I'll never be half so glad to see another as I am this one."

"Well, pardner," replied the other man, "I'd go up Jacob's ladder if they'd let it down here—anything to get offn this cussed hump of rock. Been figgerin' the last half hour on riding to glory astraddle of a stick of dynamite, rather'n be chewed by one of them varmints down there. Ugh!"

Attracted by the steadily increasing roar of the approaching aeroplane, other wearied men rose to their feet. Always mindful of

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their precarious position, and sensing a sudden activity among the spiders, as if they, too, divined the coming of some new factor in the grisly contest, Pemberton ordered the men to patrol the edge of the plateau.

With thundering motor, twin propellers flashing in the moonlight, the two navigators of the aeroplane swooped down upon them. Pemberton's heart gave a joyous leap as he recognized one of the riders.

His shout of the name was drowned by the chattering engine whose exhaust streamed a cloud of sparks and half-burned oil. But Kinzie, too, saw and recognized the man whose name Pemberton had tried to utter aloud. It was Charlie Clark, reporter for the *News*.

Slithering across the top of the plateau, they dipped down. A gleam of white flashed from the machine; then it was rising again. The weighted envelope fell almost at Pemberton's feet. He grasped it, but watched narrowly the odd maneuvers of the aeroplane, as it banked sharply and shot down into the gorge, where the gigantic spiders were rising in a new and apparently enhanced ferocity at the sight of another enemy.

Pemberton saw a gleaming something drop from the plane. Charlie Clark was reaching into a covered basket as the machine whirled past, and again he dropped a tiny object which fell to the cañon below. But no roar of explosive mingled with the steady throbs of the motor as time after time it tore around the deadly circle of ferocious insects, with the astute newspaperman watching his opportunity to hurl down the mysterious, tiny objects in an untouched group. The spiders seemed unaccountably disturbed.

On the final lap the machine headed westward and rose as if defying the straining pull of gravitational energy which held the little knot of spider-fighters jealously to earth's bosom.

Then it was gone, reverberating its defiant roar against the stern summits of the surrounding cliffs, swinging into the night with what appeared to the watchers to be an even greater speed than it had manifested in its approach.

Then only did Pemberton tear open the envelope. A cartridge rolled to the ground as he unfolded the slip which bore the message:

IKE:

If we don't come a cropper, in four hours after we spin over Spiders' Nest it will be safe for you boys to go on to the cave. We're flying skeleton-rigged—only baggage a few quadrillions of germs stolen from a dead horse this afternoon in Los Angeles. Whipple is out O. K. Anderson, Bauer, Bowen and a hundred men are coming from Barstow. Good luck and good-by. CLARK

Pemberton's thrill of hope renewed impelled him to follow the departing monoplane with his eyes. Clark's brief note held no hint of its destination, but he must wing back to the desert before he could safely alight.

The miracle of the two men, astride a machine of other men's devising, supported by and traversing the impalpable element of the air, is inspiring enough under normal conditions. Tonight, it was sublimity itself which had winged to their relief. The ordinary wonderment which the man on the ground experiences at a fellow creature scorning the limitations which hold him fast to earth grew into an exultant triumph with the watching leader.

It was altogether appropriate, in view of the incredible intelligence, gigantic size, and diabolical pertinacity of the enemy below, that the destruction of those malign monsters should be brought about by the superior craft of still other human beings.

The spiders were personified ferocity walking on eight legs, protected by breastplates that would turn a bullet. Even dynamite did not daunt those who survived it.

But, Pemberton reflected with a tinge of awe, it was through intelligent kindliness and forbearance toward other men that evolution had expanded the creative human intellect to a point where the shadowy inceptions of a brain were materialized from dreams into actualities—into achievements which proved beyond cavil man's kinship with and subjection of the gods of earth, water and air.

His philosophic reverie was suddenly interrupted when, rendered faint and dim by the intervening distance, a slender arc of fire curved upward into the silvery bosom of the night, terminating in a crimson crown of bursting stars.

Pemberton clutched Kinzie's arm and silently pointed to the southwest.

A second flash rose and burst, followed quickly by a third.

"What do you fellows see now?" anxiously queried Zack Marsh.

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"Three rockets!" despairingly replied Pemberton as he visualized the last flicker of moonlight against the wing of the aeroplane vanishing over the tops of the Three Buttes. "Henry Bowen's in trouble, too!"

And Pemberton well remembered that Clark had not been with the party when Bowen had parted from them at the waterhole on the Barstow Trail; therefore the reporter could not know just what those three rockets signified.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE ROCKET SIGNAL

THE quick trip by rail from Mohave to Los Angeles which the indefatigable and resourceful newspaperman had taken with Dr. Ludwig Bauer became the *entr' acte* to a vivid drama, each succeeding act of which opened with greater intensity and continued with human interest increasing hour by hour.

To Clark it seemed as if the creeping hands on his watch ceased to record time, becoming, instead, an index to the pressure of the new hazards he and others were incurring in the fantastic, unprecedented combat with the mammoth spiders.

On their arrival at Los Angeles, while the eminent German scientist set feverishly to work to procure a few germs of the *staphylococcus pyogenes annihilatus* and multiply them by tens of thousands with gelatine cultures in an incubator at the Pasteur Institute, the reporter hied him to a cottage in Hollywood.

Fred Francis, reputed to be the most daring aviator on the Coast, lived there. As recreations he grew onions, smoked a jimmy pipe, and repaid Clark's interest in him by reading every line his friend wrote. Francis was short, stocky and compact, weighing one hundred and fifty-eight pounds. On the ground he was silent, reserved and indifferent. Aloft he was a venturesome pilot, startling observers by his daring evolutions, swirling, skidding, tangoing in a way to horrify watchers and induce predictions of his speedy demise.

Temperament has much to do with aviation. Francis only grinned at the gruesome prophecies, enjoying equally the exhilaration of flight and the gossip it created. His powerful biplane, with its hundred-horsepower engine, went up and down in all kinds of weather, while other airmen shook their heads at his presumption.

Francis arose lazily, knocking the ashes from his brier, as Clark bounded up the steps.

"Hello, Charlie! I thought the gorillas had got you for sure. Not a signed story by you for three days past in the *News*. What's the trouble?"

"How far and how fast can you fly with a passenger?" demanded Clark, ignoring the wide-flung arms of a seductive porch rocker.

"Oh, two hundred and fifty miles without a stop, at a pinch. A thousand if I have gas and oil planted where I can pick it up when I want it. Farther than that I wouldn't want to trust spark-plugs without cleaning them—this witch's fluid around here has altogether too high a percentage of carbon to suit me. Are you thinking of taking another trip with me? Thought the last time I gave you the Coney Island roll you swore off joy-riding on the sunbeams."

"Is the old boat in good shape?"

"Every wire is as tight as the fiddle-strings on Ole Bull's music box. Why?"

"How long will it take to dismount it and assemble it again?"

"An hour for each operation."

"Do you want to earn a thousand dollars—maybe two?"

"Stop where you are, Charlie. I'm a good sport, but if you started in to show me a thousand real dollars I'd get a fluffy feeling around the pocketbook so sudden that I'd be liable to maul you over the head with a wrench."

"Come on and let's look at the old girl."

Somewhat perplexed, Fred Francis followed his volatile friend. Never before had he seen Charlie Clark in quite such a hurry. The reporter fairly ran to the tent which served as a hangar, falling over the mechanic who was grooming the big biplane as he leaped in.

In another moment he was back in the house, calling for the "Gila Monster" over the 'phone and cursing under his breath at the operator's imperceptible delay.

TWO hours afterward Charlie Clark was frantically shoving one end of an aeroplane-wing into a big dray, and offering unbelievable sums of money if the driver of the big truck would catch the Mohave Express northbound.



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At the railroad station he seized the roll of bills which the messenger boy handed him, stuffed the accompanying note into his pocket without reading it, and clambered on a Pullman, where Dr. Bauer was already complacently waiting with a physician's leather case full of test-tubes, each carefully closed with red sealing-wax.

At Mohave the reporter again became the incarnation of Mercury, god of quick action, following a chat with some arrivals from Old Camp Cady. These retold Whipple's story of the men imprisoned in Spider Cañon.

While reassembling the aeroplane, Clark flagellated the slow-moving mechanic in picturesque language, the terminology of which was unusually sulfurous.

He counted out and gave Francis a thousand dollars before swinging to the seat on the 'plane beside his aviator chum. He jammed his hat well down over his eyes, after strapping on a pair of goggles. The case with the germs was fastened in a basket alongside within easy reach.

"Get up a couple of thousand feet," he gritted, "then point southeast for Old Camp Cady. Keep right on over that dump, and when you pick up three peaks in the edge of the Kingston Range a hundred miles farther along, make for them. Then up the cañon behind the three peaks until we see what we're after. That's where the boys are penned in."

The phenomenal speed of the biplane precluded words, because of both the air-pressure and the deafening roar of the Maxim gun which some one had persuaded Francis was a seven-cylinder gasoline motor.

The up-trip on the train from Los Angeles to Mohave had been consumed by Clark with imparting instructions to Francis and receiving his own directions from Dr. Bauer. As a result, their flight from Mohave had continued without a stop for at least a hundred and seventy-five miles, when the two intrepid chaps flew over the highest peak of the Three Buttes on their way back.

After dropping their cargo of deadly germs upon the spider-army, the aviators headed groundward to commandeer gasoline from one of the relief-autos, already worming its way across the sands toward the entrance to what was now called "Spider Cañon."

They slid down the seven hundred feet of intervening altitude to a perfect landing on the smooth, wind-blown stretch of sand, and both leaped out to stretch their chilled and stiffened bodies.

"WHAT was that signal of three rockets we saw?" asked Francis, when he had tested engine controls and inspected oil and gas tanks.

"I don't know, exactly," replied Clark, "but I have an idea we shall find out presently. Here comes another machine."

As the car drew up they saw that it was driven by Walter Whipple, the returning courier, caked with dust and half dead for lack of sleep. There had been no rest for him in Old Camp Cady after his mad flight down the cañon to escape the vanguard of the spider-army. Not only had he quickly recruited another and larger force of men and supplies, but he had also outstripped most of them on the dash back, and was now leading the next machine behind him by two or three miles.

While Clark had learned from men at Mohave of the plight of the Pemberton party he had not seen Whipple.

That individual pulled up his machine within twenty-five yards of the spectrally gleaming aeroplane.

"Hi!" he shouted, as he sprang from his seat and came running over toward the other two. "Did you see them rockets off there?"

"We were just wondering what they meant," answered Clark. "Do you know?"

"Well, day before yesterday, when we came down this-a-way," replied Whipple, "Henry Bowen and a few fellers went on down to his bungalow near Barstow to take keer of his wife and girl. But the boys all come back again to Old Camp Cady last night—said they hadn't seen sign of ary spider that far south. All the same, if Hank Bowen needed help, he was to send up three rockets. And thet's just what I seen a few minutes ago."

"Did any of the party coming out with you on this trip go back to the Bowen bungalow?" queried Clark.

"Nix. Everybody that could outfit with a machine is behind me a-comin' over here to go up Spider Cañon to clean up the danged things in there and save Pemberton's party. How be they, anyway?"

Clark and Francis described the perilous situation of the men on the rock and the

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probability that it would be several hours before they could descend.

"Even then," added the newspaperman, "they must go on to the cave and see if the rest of the Bauer party are still alive. But about Bowen—why don't some of your machines turn back to the Barstow trail and go down and see what's the matter there?"

"Hain't got time," shuddered Whipple. "Young feller, it'd take all of five hours to git back across this here sand, and then it's a right smart drive to Barstow, along o' the regular trail."

Clark turned to Francis.

"Fred, that's just what I've been afraid of, all along. That same sand-storm that whirled Dr. Bauer against Pemberton's auto also swept down some spiders from the cañon, back there. We know that for sure, because they chased Henry Bowen's machine two days ago on the way up. Now, since the men who went in with Bowen have gone back again to Old Camp Cady, that leaves him there all alone, save for his wife and daughter and a few servants. And practically every available man and machine is either up that cañon fighting other spiders—or so near here as to be out of effective range to help Bowen. What do you say to our going instead?"

"I'm game!" stoutly retorted his friend. "All I need is plenty of gasoline. Which way is it?"

"Due south," replied Whipple, as Clark dragged over a couple of five-gallon containers from the other machine. " 'Baout five miles this side o' Barstow, in a little group o' hills, where the Kingston Range stretches over toward the Sierra Madre offshoots. You can't miss it—not in this light. Concrete house, big lake dammin' up an *arroyo*, a lot of pines, good road leadin' up from town, their own 'lectric lights—all in plain view."

"We can fly on to Barstow and get help from there inside of an hour," suggested Francis.

"That's a good idee," replied Whipple. "It ain't over five or six mile from the town—they can make it from there long before we could git back to the main trail from here. Besides, we've got our work cut out for us up this here cañon, I guess, from what little I see early this mornin' before I back-tracked for Old Camp Cady."

"Oh, I forgot to tell you that most of the spiders will be dead or dying by the time you get there," replied the reporter. "I've given all that's around the Pemberton party some of Doc Bauer's *annihilatus* tonic—warranted to do the work."

With fifteen gallons of gas in the tanks the two reseated themselves in the 'plane while Whipple, acting as mechanic, spun the propeller. They were up almost immediately, and crossed over several of the rescue-autos as they turned to the south and shot away across the great sterile stretches of the Mohave. Then it was that Clark received a sudden thrill of horror.

He had no more test-tubes of the deadly germs!

Francis, however, did not see the pall of deadly fear which fell across the face of his friend. He was too intent on driving the 'plane over the intervening desert between them and Barstow—a vast, sandy waste, whose surface reflected back the pure moonlight with unearthly beauty, calm, silent, majestic.

Charlie Clark peered with anxious eyes across the vista, in his heart a growing terror lest perhaps, after all, they might arrive too late for effective assistance.

His blood chilled as he thought of the meaning of those three rockets. Henry Bowen, desert-bred adventurer that he was, would not send such a signal for aid unless he deemed his position likely to grow untenable.

What would they find, as they thundered over the place where Bowen, his wife and daughter were immured? Were they, too, hemmed in by a circle of such insect-fiends as had been squatting around Pemberton and the other party?

The idea appalled him.

Dimly into his mind came a fragment of the words of the German scientist—"mysterious adversaries, our rivals, *perhaps our ultimate successors!*"

Rivals? Successors?

And the most wonderful girl in the world, winsome, young, cultured and lovable, perhaps in the clutches of creatures whom Maeterlinck described as "more monstrous, more insane, more atrocious and more infernal" than anything which earth-life could evolve!

Clark could only gaze dumbly down upon the more rolling ground replacing the desert's dead level as the biplane volleyed across the first of the foothills beyond which lay Barstow. The chaste outlines of Henry

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Bowen's country home, and the sheen of the artificial lake beside it, were already in view. Francis pointed toward it as he tilted down the nose of the machine. They swept over it at eighty miles an hour, but both clearly discerned the hideous, squat blotch on the roof, and caught the glitter of eight crimson points of light as a spider glared vengefully up at them.

## CHAPTER XIII

### RESCUE

THE rescuing-party, led by Walter Whipple's car, met with no opposition as they raced up the cañon. When they reached the place where Pemberton's fighters were still perched on the rocks many spiders were in evidence, but those in whom life still lingered were writhing helplessly.

"They act jest like a man with the cholera," averred Whipple. "Look at the —— things holdin' on to their bellies!"

The main body of survivors of the attacking spider-army was already out of sight. Despite their speedy progress back toward the cañon of radio-active rock, the retreat was marked by a constant decimation in numbers of what had been the most formidable enemy the human family had encountered in modern history.

By twos and threes, by dozens and scores and in the last half mile by hundreds, the uncanny monsters fell and died along the defile. Those of them which happened to be affected by fewer parasites, it was afterward found, managed to reach the cavern, into which they plunged, never to reappear.

"Have no fear!" smiled Dr. Ludwig Bauer, with the certitude of one whose scientific knowledge borders on indisputable prophecy. He pointed to the dead and dying remnant of ghastly insects huddled around the base of the cliff where the heroic stand had been made.

"These parasites multiply with inconceivable rapidity, so long as food is available," he continued. "An hour of their life is equivalent to a century of ours. Likewise, they reproduce by binary division instead of themselves dying—one aged germ making itself two, two making four, four making eight—and so on. Never will a spider remain alive in that cavern or out of it."

"But the germs?" queried one of the newcomers, as the machines halted amid the cheers of the men to whose aid they had come. "What becomes of them?"

The scientist smiled his slow, inscrutable smile.

"What becomes of the life-principle of human beings?" he queried in return. "These *annihilatus* parasites disappear and reappear in the economy of nature when needed, as mysteriously as life continually flows into the world behind the footsteps of death in the human family. Who knows, after all, the whence or whither of anything?"

Under Pemberton's direction the wounded man on the plateau was lowered, and Dr. Anderson, assisted by Dr. Bauer, immediately relieved him by performing an operation of blood transfusion from two volunteers. Meanwhile others moved the damaged autos out of the way and smoothed a path for the other machines to cross the cañon-floor, by filling up the holes and removing the rocks dislodged by dynamite explosions. Then the advance to the cavern itself was continued.

A ghastly sight greeted their arrival. Lying on a shelf of rock alongside the entrance were the five members of Dr. Bauer's party —all barely alive, rigid and semi-conscious. Examination showed each had received injections of deadly venom from the spiders. The effect of the poison was to cause them to become as helplessly inert as if paralyzed.

With professional celerity the two physicians prepared a rude operating-table. Lars Larsen, who seemed to be in the most critical condition, was first attended.

In the hours preceding dawn, under the illumination of several acetylene headlights thrown by autos so grouped that the work of the physicians might be unhampered, the poisoned arteries of the great Swede were slowly drained of some of his affected blood, while the uncontaminated life-fluid, drawn from various sturdy men of the party, replaced it. These volunteers, in turn, were each given strong stimulants with hypodermics and injections of saline solution into their own veins in order that no ill effects might follow.

Larsen was able to move his arms and legs slightly when placed in the machine. The four Germans in Dr. Bauer's party were likewise treated, one after the other. It was broad day when the five former prisoners of the spiders were recovered sufficiently to be safely moved.

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Very slowly the party proceeded back down the cañon, all of the patients receiving liberal and frequent drafts of ice-cold milk and brandy from thermos bottles and flasks. By the time the Three Buttes were reached all were sufficiently revived to be able to speak.

LARSEN'S story of his hideous mental torture was the most vivid of all. His enormous reserve strength had sustained him longer than the other men, although he had been the most badly wounded of the five.

To a man of his tremendous physique and natural activity, the slow inhibition of nerve ganglia following the spread of the spider poison was superlatively horrifying. In his quaint vernacular, little by little, he narrated how every muscle grew taut as a steel cable; how strength departed until he was completely helpless, with extremities like ice, and only a faint glow in the center of his body, like a few coals in the midst of ashes, showed him that he was still alive; how finally only the functions of sight, hearing and respiration remained to him, and with them the power to realize what was happening.

Although unable to move hand or foot, nevertheless he had watched the activities of the spider-colony continuously, including the egress of the marching battalions in unavailing pursuit of Dr. Bauer, and again to give battle with the Pemberton rescue-party, as well as the return of the infected monsters when they plunged into the depths of the cavern.

He solemnly averred that higher up on the side of the mountain there had hung a web, which he could see faintly by rolling back his eyes slightly; and that up and down this enormous network various spiders, apparently of more acute sensibilities than some of the others, appeared to receive messages from other points. From time to time the sentinel would climb down, and then would follow a gathering of others to whom it would impart what it had learned.

Larsen could not explain how this information was transmitted, for he had been deafened by the spread of the poison; but from what he could see he was of the opinion that the spiders possessed not only ideas and a high order of intelligence, but a language through which they communicated to each other. Judging by the conclaves held from time to time, the orderly character of those gatherings, and the regularity of the marching-formations which he had seen, he concluded also that the colony had governors and generals whom the others obeyed.

Not until he had been told that the retreat of the shattered army of spiders—many of them writhing in deadly agony from the parasites infesting them as they plunged into the cavern—had been brought about through the knowledge of Dr. Bauer, could the big Swedish miner bring himself to believe that the Kingston Range could ever again be the scene of a successful mining-venture.

Pemberton and the physicians agreed that a quick run must be made back to Old Camp Cady, where the rescued men could have the care that their condition rendered imperative to make certain a speedy recovery to a normal condition.

The men were distributed among the available machines and every ounce of gasoline was husbanded, as they were nearly at the limit of the carrying-capacity of the vehicles owing to the damage done by the spiders and dynamite to some of the autos which the first party had used.

One exception only was made. A light car was turned over to Pemberton and Kinzie, who, by virtue of their superior knowledge of that section of the country, acted as rear-guard. After they emerged from the cañon, the two also made a détour from the main track across the desert toward the Barstow Trail, searching for traces of other spiders in the vicinity.

It was while about three hundred yards north and a little east of the route which the others were following that Pemberton, who was driving, uttered a grunt of disgust as one of his tires blew out with a bang.

He descended to inspect the damage. The jagged top of a tomato-can had punctured the worn casing and penetrated the tube. As he jerked it from where it was imbedded in the rubber, a bit of paper wrapped about a stone fell from the can.

"Who is the burro-brained tenderfoot who left a last message to home and kin in this thing?" growled Big Ike, as he scanned the fragment.

In another second he was on his knees pawing frantically at the sand beneath the wheel.

"What's the matter?" queried Kinzie,

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who until now had not seen the cause of the puncture.

"Matter?" howled Pemberton, as he jerked loose two or three small stones and kept pulling them from beneath the machine. "Well, Joe, I guess you won't need any steam-shovel to uncover your claim after all—there can't be more than two feet of sand on this monument of yours, anyway."

The old-time prospector could only gasp and squat down in the sand to read his own location-notice, while Pemberton carefully erected a new cairn with the stones and topped it with a monkey-wrench holding in its jaws a fragment of bandage, which would serve as a guide to the buried claim he had once started out to examine.

This done, they replaced the damaged tire with a new one and proceeded along the trail, rejoining the others at the water-hole. At its edge was a forked stick holding a card:

Bowen party safe. Clark with them. Am flying back to Los Angeles direct. FRANCIS.

Delighted at the aviator's message, the procession turned to the north along the firm ground of the old trail. Whipple had ordered several machines to await them at various points with reserve gas and water. His foresight in this respect enabled the entire party to arrive at Old Camp Cady about nine o'clock that same evening, with the welcome news that the menace of malevolent giant spiders was ended forever, except for the few which might possibly have been blown down Barstow Trail in the sand-storm that brought Dr. Bauer to the Pemberton machine.

AS BIG IKE and Kinzie hurried over to the hotel to arrange for the reception and care of the injured pending their recovery, they ran into Henry Bowen.

"Well, by the piper who played before Moses, you're sure a sight for sore eyes!" he shouted, hurrying down to grasp their hands.

"How did you beat us back here?" demanded Pemberton.

"We got in by train *via* Mohave not two hours ago."

"Did you see any spiders? We piped off your rockets last night, but couldn't help ourselves, to say nothing of helping you," explained the leader of the first expedition.

"Did we? Say — if it hadn't been for them two fellers in that aeroplane, I guess we'd have all got the worst of it!" emphatically declared the magnate. "I got overconfident when we found my folks all right the night I left you, and I told the boys that I guessed they better go back to Old Camp Cady and see how you fellers was getting along."

"So Whipple told us," interpolated Kinzie.

"Well, I guess I'm getting old," resumed Bowen. "I left all my spare cartridges in one of the machines, and never found it out till the boys had been gone half a day. Later in the afternoon, just as I was cranking up my machine to take the women and servants down to Barstow—lo and behold, down charged five of the ugliest varmints of spiders I ever set eyes on; and before I could make a move, one of 'em was almost in my front door."

The listeners, intently interested, held their breath.

"Fact!" succinctly exclaimed Bowen, wiping the sweat from his face. "I grabbed up my gun. I was so plumb nervous that before I realized what I was doing, I'd wasted eight of the sixteen shots in that gun of mine to kill two of them and six of the other eight on two more. Never shot so rotten in all my life!"

He paused again, and when he went on his voice was trembling.

"Lucky for us that house was made of concrete, or the other dad-burned critter'd torn it down—I swear it would. As it was, he bit pieces out of the panels of the doors and ripped off winder frames with his jaws so it'll take a couple of hundred dollars to repair the damage.

"I sent Betty—that's my daughter—up to the roof to send off them three rockets, and darned if the thing didn't jump plumb to the top almost before she could get back and bang the scuttle shut, while I was running around on the lower floor, trying to get a shot at it. I had to be careful because I only had two cartridges left."

"Fer Heaven's sake, hurry up and tell us how you killed it!" gasped Kinzie.

"Me? Huh! My wife and me and Betty and two or three servants was penned inside, with two shots in a rifle and a carving-knife, when we heard what we thought was a machine-gun banging away. I couldn't make out what the devil it all meant—there hadn't been time to bring up

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any Regulars with artillery—when, *blam!* down come the thing not a hundred yards beyond the house, lickety-brindle! It was the aeroplane!"

"Then what?" exploded Big Ike. "Did they fall?"

"Fall nothin'! No, they come down on purpose, and mighty sudden. Then out tumbled that harum-scarum reporter from Los Angeles—Clark, they call him. The spider seen him and he seen the spider and they went to it like a bulldog and a bear-cat! Seemed just like each had a grudge 'gainst the other. Never seen nothin' like it in all my born days. Clark——"

He paused and blew his nose lustily.

"Clark, he just kept borin' right in like he was looking to bite that spider's head off, showin' his teeth and makin' a noise like a whoop, a growl and a roar all to once—anything but that devilish spider would have turned tail at such a noise as that, or dropped dead. Then, when he was within fifteen feet—*blam! blam! blam!*—Clark give it to the thing, right through three eyes with an automatic he had. That spider never knew what hit him, and the last bullet kept on comin' and like to got me, too."

THE listening men stared at each other and then at the capitalist.

"That settled it," continued Bowen, in a quavering voice. "It was the last spider in that neck of the woods, for them two fellers cruised around for miles in their machine, and not a trace of one could they find. Then Clark come down to Barstow with me and the folks, and the avyater flew back to the water-hole to leave word for you fellers that we was safe, and then over the hills to the city. Some flier, that kid! Seems to like it, too. Only thing I ever seen that anybody liked better was the way that reporter waded into that spider!"

"Where is he now?" asked Kinzie.

"Curled up in the parlor, sleepin' peaceful's a kitten!"

## CHAPTER XIV

### SOME QUESTIONS ARE SETTLED

"GENTLEMEN, I fear you are giving me too much credit."

Dr. Bauer was smiling at the throng of citizens who overran the hotel veranda and the street of Old Camp Cady on which it was situated. In the thick of the crowd nearest him were Henry Bowen, Isaac Pemberton, Joe Kinzie, and their late companions in the expedition which had so narrowly escaped annihilation by the spiders.

"Don't be too modest, Doctor!" laughed Pemberton. "No one in this part of the country would be alive today but for your heroic fortitude and scientific knowledge."

"That's right!" shouted the men, crowding in from all sides. "Three cheers for Bauer!"

Every one cheered. Then they cheered again. And again. The scientist's blushes were so marked that his dark beard seemed rooted in red. They hoisted him to the veranda rail, and cries of "Speech! Speech!" arose from all parts of the crowd. The German lifted his hand for silence.

"My friends, I will say a few words," he began. "I am proud to have been of service to you. But I have been more than repaid by the gallantry of some of you—especially those who literally gave their life-blood to save the men of my expedition. Had it not been for that blood-transfusion, they could never have survived the toxic quality of the wounds which the spiders inflicted upon them.

"Also, we must remember Mr. Pemberton and Mr. Kinzie, without whose fortunate assistance I should have died far out on the desert. And last, there is Mr. Clark, the resourceful journalist. It was his foresight in waiting to learn what would be the best way to destroy those malignant monsters, who threatened the human race with annihilation, as well as his individual bravery in a most hazardous journey, flying to the cañon and then to Mr. Bowen's country home, that made possible the rescue of the brave men who had gone ahead to do battle with ordinary methods, and the helpless ladies farther down the valley."

He was interrupted by another cheer and when it died away shouts of "Clark! Clark!" followed. Pemberton and Bowen wedged through the crowd and pushed their way into the hotel.

"Where's Clark?" demanded the old capitalist, searching the hall with shining eyes.

A thunderous knock on the parlor door brought a beautiful, slender, golden-haired young woman into the hall. Her face flamed as the vice-president of the Mohave Consolidated demanded—

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"Is that rascal Clark in there, Betty?"

"Yes, papa. He—he—he just woke up."

"Tell him to come out here."

The individual desired emerged. He essayed a swagger, but under the stern eyes of Henry Bowen he faltered.

"The boys want to see you," said Bowen, his eyes twinkling at the look of dismay on his daughter's face. "Get out there, quick!"

Clark obeyed with a meekness which contrasted oddly with his usual cocky air of self-assurance. The waiting crowd set up another vociferous cheering as Dr. Bauer led him forward.

The newspaperman grinned sheepishly.

"Come on, Charlie!" jibed Joe Kinzie.

"Go on! Go on!" shricked the crowd.

"Well, there wasn't anything to it. Fred Francis and I shipped his 'plane on the Overland Limited over to Mohave, and Dr. Bauer drifted along with us, carrying his staff of death-germs. All we had to do then was to float over and drop Mr. Annihilatus down on the critters. Those that lived long enough to get back into the uranium cave helped kill off the ones hiding in there, by the infection.

"Then we flew on down to Mr. Bowen's place in time to clean up the last one of five — he'd killed the other four himself. Thanks to Dr. Bauer, we've partially settled the question of who will ultimately inherit this part of California. It won't be spiders, anyway."

Another succession of hearty cheers for all concerned, and the residents of Old Camp Cady were dispersing, each to his respective task. Pemberton and Kinzie walked down the veranda steps, now and again looking back at the animated face of the newspaperman, who was talking earnestly with Bowen.

"How will she run, Joe?" queried Pemberton.

"She won't run at all. Look at her!" rumbled the prospector, jerking a thumb at Beatrice Bowen, whose head rested against her father's arm as her radiant face was upturned to that of the reporter.

Pemberton doubled up with laughter.

"I didn't mean the girl—I meant your claim," he explained.

"Oh!" Joe Kinzie seemed like a man awaking from a deep trance. "Well, Ike, there ain't any use of my painting any fancy pictures about what I've got. All I know is I've got it—probably a thousand tons of it—all ready for a Rinor dry-washing machine. From what I sifted out with my cheese-cloth sieve, I should say she ought to run between sixteen hundred and eighteen hundred dollars a ton—unless she falls down. That much I'm fairly sure of, pard."

"We'll go in tomorrow," replied Pemberton unhesitatingly. "What makes you look so miserable, Joe? Ain't everything coming your way?"

Kinzie looked sidewise at the other man. His sunburned face took on a deeper tinge as he replied:

"Well, pardner, I'm just beginning to wish I could trade that claim of mine for something that I'll never be able to buy with all the money in the world. I'm fifty-two years old, Ike, and I'd hand over everything you and me'll ever own jest to trade places with Charlie Clark back there for the next ten years!"

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# THE CAMP-FIRE
## A Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers.

YOU will remember "War Day by Day" by George Albert Schreiner, who served as captain in the famous Staats Artillery during the Boer War. In his article in this issue he has changed the name of a steamer or two, but the remainder is fact. Though he modestly refrains from mentioning it, Captain Schreiner himself was in charge of the "Six Hundred" whose "return" is the subject of the present article. Here is a bit from his letter:

It deals with the exit of the soldiers of fortune of the veld. But that is not all, as you will find. Generally it is believed that the commando in question surrendered for other reasons than those here given. But that is calumny.

You will find the little map I have drawn to be accurate, though made entirely from memory. I had to map the position, and remember every essential detail.

I returned to the Boer lines shortly after our arrival in New York, carrying dispatches from the United States and from the Boer headquarters in Europe. But that trip was rather colorless.

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TALBOT MUNDY is one of the fastest writers I know. Some of his stories have come to us in the very first draft, just as he wrote them off on the typewriter, *and* his "copy" is always about as "clean" as an editor gets. Sometimes he has written a story, destroyed it entire, written it all over again, destroyed the second copy, and so on for, maybe, three or four times, but each time the writing is done quickly, smoothly, and in finished form.

In this issue you have the first story of *Dick Anthony of Arran*, "The Sword of Iskander," a complete novelette, the beginning of a series giving the adventures of this same *Dick Anthony*, who moves on to bigger and bigger deeds, concerning which I will not tell you one single word in advance. Except this. On *this* story Talbot Mundy has *not* worked quickly. He could have done a long serial in the same time and with half the work.

THIS time he set out to do something stronger and bigger than he had ever done before. Plot after plot was discarded. Time and again he put on his skis—you will remember that now he lives in a little town in the Maine woods—and went out alone for a day in the open, where little ideas fall away and you find big ones in their place. Snow and the pine-trees, lake, river, and the everlasting hills by day, the flames of a roaring fire on his own hearth by night; every minute and every faculty were strained to the utmost in pursuit of the one big conception that would bring him the man and the deeds he must have to make this story what he had set his heart on making it. And he found them.

THEN came the writing of it. Write and destroy, write and destroy, write and destroy. The words must be equal to the theme. Write and destroy, write and destroy, and go on writing. *Dick Anthony* was a living being by this time and his deeds had become an epic. With a tale like that to tell, could he let it be merely a good story instead of the throbbing, pulsing reality it was to him?

And at last it was done.

It came to me just as the office day was closing. I began to read it. Long after the others had all gone home I sat alone and read it to the end. Perhaps it would be nearer the mark to say I lived it. And now it is your turn to meet *Dick Anthony of Arran.*

---

STEPHEN CHALMERS claims no big adventures. But he has moved around quite a lot. Born in Scotland; collision at sea; fire at sea; train collision; metropolitan newspaperman; correspondent in West Indies of New York *Times;* an adventure in a balloon; another with a burglar whom he captured with an empty gun; quartermaster



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on a schooner whose Captain was an ex-pirate and whose cook was a fire-swallower out of a circus job; planter's overseer in Jamaica; bitten three times by one centipede; killing a wounded buck after being locked in its horns half an hour. Take it all and all, life hasn't been too tame to him.

You already know how he met the late Ralph Delamere Keefer, once of the North-west Mounted, and how between them they wrote the stories the last of which appears in this issue.

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TRIPLE squeeze? So far as I know, that play has never been worked in baseball. Is it humanly possible? Well, Wm. B. Hanna, for years baseball editor of the New York *Sun* and at this writing with the Giants on the road, is considered to be about as wise as they make 'em when it comes to the cans, can'ts, dids and didn'ts of the national game; and in his story in this issue he has carefully worked out an idea he's been turning over in his mind for a long time—that, given just the right men and conditions, a triple squeeze *is* possible.

---

S. B. H. HURST, who has a tale in this number, has spent most of his life on the sea, as you will recall. Now here is something else, which doesn't seem connected with the foregoing, but is.

Very, very long poems are hard to sell and generally to read. Also, a prize-fight is not usually chosen as the subject for a poem. However, some time ago a man (and an adventurer) wrote a very, very long poem about a prize-fight, and one of the most staid and literary magazines of England published it, which last was quite a shock to everybody, including, probably, the magazine itself. Still more strange, people were tremendously interested in that poem. And even more strange than that, they ought to have been. Its title—strange again—was "The Everlasting Mercy." The man's name, of course, is John Masefield.

Now here is a letter from Mr. Hurst:

I have made verse ever since I began to think—always burning it when written. The other day I sent a thing I wrote one evening in 1906 in a room off a mining-camp saloon to a New York magazine, because I made a strange discovery. When I was sixteen I was in the ship *Gilcruix*, always writing verse. I tried hard to teach another boy of my own age to do likewise, but gave him up. He arranged with the consul to be sent home from Iquique. Naturally, when thinking of him I have always felt myself very much his superior. Imagine my feelings, reading a magazine the other day, when I saw staring at me from the page the photo of the boy I tried to teach to write verse, over the words, "John Masefield, the Literary Lion of England."

There were six of us "boys." I was the senior. Healy, whose father was senior captain of the Elder Dempster Line; Christopher, whose father was president of King William's School, the Isle of Man; Connoughton, nephew of Harry Furniss, of *Punch* fame; Masefield, Shaw, and myself. I have never seen any of them since.

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HERE is something from Carrington Boykin, who is a newspaperman, about his story in this number:

The fireman in this city is a gentleman for whom I have sincere respect. His fiercest work is at night, when most of us are sleeping—or ought to be—diving into fires with his hose and ax. I have seen these men do their work in all sorts of weather, have chummed with them, and ridden to fires with them.

"The Probationer" originated with the following incident which occurred during the fire in the early part of 19—, where eight lives were lost. I reached the fire about 6 A. M., just in time to see three men leap to their death on the —— Street side of the building. Shortly after this Mr. ——, an officer of the —— Company, with offices at the northwest corner of the building, arrived, anxious to secure some valuable papers from his office before the fire destroyed them.

THIS gentleman, in company with two watchmen, entered the cagelike affair in which the offices were located. The door to this place was a spring one and closed behind them. When they were about to leave, the floor caved in from above, pinning —— and one watchman against the barred door, and crushing the third man to the floor beside the bars, mortally injuring him. His two companions yelled and firemen located them, but could do nothing, for the iron bars held despite battering with axes and pulling with ropes.

From the street outside I could see the two men cramped against the bars and the other mashed to the floor, dying in agony, and the fire eating its way through the débris toward the three. 'Twas a time for heroic action and never did I see men respond with more zeal than the firemen. The water—tons of it—was unable to hold back the flames, which steadily approached the imprisoned men.

AT LAST a blowpipe was obtained and two bars were burned through, bent back, and—— and one watchman dragged out, half dead from water and fear. The third man was beyond aid; no power could have raised the beams that wedged him to the floor. His moans could be heard in the street.

A young ambulance-surgeon from a downtown hospital volunteered to go and do all he could for the dying man. A fireman lent him the proper togs. Just before the surgeon went in I asked him what he intended to do for the man and he replied that he did not know.

After he had gone I thought that it would be far more merciful if the doctor would sort of help him along so that he would not be tortured by the fire, which would reach him shortly. I do not dare insinuate that the surgeon even dreamed of such a thing, but when he came out he was pale and a

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little excited. Since then I have heard a fireman who was in that hell-hole at the time say that the surgeon "sort of eased him down."

WITH this as a nucleus I wrote "The Probationer." "Smoky Jim" Duffy, the Fire Chief, is a real being (name changed, of course) in a downtown fire-house. He can certainly do things in the fire-fighting line—perhaps you yourself have seen him clanging at breakneck speed to a fire. And men usually move when he speaks. And don't forget that there are real probationers, and most of them have a pretty hard row to hoe. The fight in the blazing building is of course fiction.

# THE REAL FATE OF BULLY HAYES

## The Camp-Fire Solves a South-Sea Mystery of Long Standing

FIRST let us meet the man himself—buccaneer, freebooter, trader, blackbirder, hero, smuggler, pirate, what you will. A splendidly powerful physique, above the middle height and weighing over 200 pounds. Heavy brown beard carefully trimmed; a little bald; blue eyes extremely bright and seemingly full of fun and laughter. A handsome man with a soft voice and persuading ways. "Dressed always in perfection of taste." An American. Good-hearted, cruel, unscrupulous, violent in his passions—"mad as a hatter," says one who sailed with him. But certainly not insane. This much and one or two small items that follow we get from an article by Louis Becke and others quoted by him in *The Lone Hand*, a leading Australian magazine, a copy of which was sent to me by Mr. Becke himself.

Rumors? There is no end to them. In his day Bully Hayes loomed big among the islands of the Pacific. He has become, with time, the hero of a myriad legends, true and untrue. The deeds of other men are attributed to him, and his own changed and twisted into a hundred versions. Many hated him. Many liked him. Many did both. For, whatever he may have been, there is no doubt of his wonderful personal magnetism and charm when he pleased to exhibit them.

A WORD more, by way of general setting. He was born in Cleveland, Ohio, served under Farragut, left the U. S. Navy under a cloud, and appeared in the South Seas somewhere around 1860—some accounts say 1864, some 1855; others say he visited Honolulu in the Fall of 1858. There is a story that once he could have escaped from a Spanish prison in Manila by becoming a British subject and thus giving the willing captain of an English cruiser legal excuse for extricating him. He refused. "I served with credit as an officer under Farragut. Honor from my country is lost to me now, but I came into this prison an American and, if ever I leave it, it will be as an American!"

You will note that I've been using the past tense. For Bully Hayes *is* dead, and that's an end of the rumors that he is alive and in a monastery in Luzon, or prowling elsewhere under some other name.

NOW let's turn to some of the evidence collected. First, H. D. Couzens. You will remember his stories and that he himself spent years in the South Pacific and knows the ways of the sea. What he says here shows the difficulties in following the trail.

I have tried, for a number of years, to gather a sequence of facts that would range from the beginning to the end of his career in the South Seas, but found the attempt quite fruitless. There are facts and facts—random, disconnected, and maddeningly unsatisfactory, though I have gone to sources of information that should have brought results.

He lost the brig *Leonora* at Kusai (I believe) in the Carolines, and apparently passed out of history. I believe that Louis Becke was his supercargo at that time, and some of his dealings with Hayes are recorded more or less faithfully by Thomas Browne (Rolf Bolderwood) in "A Modern Buccaneer."

I have tried in vain to learn what became of him. Joshua Slocum, in his book "Sailing Alone around the World," says that he saw Hayes in a monastery, garbed as a monk, in Manila. One old trading captain told me positively that he died in the Solomons; another, equally positive, that he was stabbed to death by one of his crew, and this was supplemented by the missionary whom I shall mention presently. However, when the question is asked, "How do you know?" it invariably brings forth the reply, "Why, I heard it down Manahiki way" or some other out-of-the-way anchorage.

OF ADVENTURES between his advent and exodus in the South Seas one can gather an infinite number anywhere among the islands; forty years ago the man was common gossip in every port south of the line. I have heard Charlie Williams

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of Honolulu, who was one of Hayes' crew, tell many yarns of his exploits, but I suppose Charlie (who is, I think, a three-quarter Hawaiian) is the poorest narrator God has made. Pressed for details such as a conscientious biographer requires, he does not remember. His description of Hayes is that he was a "fine, big fella."

Captain A. H. Otis, who was master of the *Casco* on Stevenson's first voyage South, told me that on that same voyage (1888-89) they could get nothing definite about Hayes, and that his name was merely a tradition.

A CERTAIN missionary (I have no authority to give his name for publication), a contemporary and co-worker with the martyred Bishop Hamilton, told me the following incidents concerning Hayes: He began his career as a pirate by stealing a lumber-schooner out of San Francisco, taking her down the coast and selling the lumber at Mazatlan, Mexico. I inquired *how* he stole her. The missionary did not know; he could only state the bare fact.

My informant also said that Hayes was later stabbed to death by one of the crew of the lumber-schooner, his first vessel, in revenge for the abuse of years before. I can not say that this looks reasonable to me. Hayes' career covered a period of several years and a seaman's grudge does not last over one voyage, as a rule. I think there is an error here, and that is the trouble with all of this kind of information. Time, prejudice, the tendency of exaggerated gossip to establish itself and be accepted as concrete fact, make the way of the historian or biographer a hard one.

A NUMBER of letters and brief hints have come in from various quarters of the globe, but the accounts given here cover the facts.

Captain A. E. Dingle, now of Staten Island, N. Y., but for years a deep-sea sailor, writes as follows:

There have been many rumors floating around the Australian ports concerning his fate, and when I was last in Sydney an uncle of mine, who with my father had met and known Hayes, told me he believed Hayes had got mixed up with some trouble in Noumea, New Caledonia, the French penal settlement, and had barely got away to the New Hebrides, where it was believed he had been put away by the natives.

Captain Dingle also gives an interesting account of how Peter Baudette, French trader on Nukahiva in the Marquesas, encroached on a patch of pearl-shell Hayes was working as a private "spec" and how Hayes evened accounts. While Baudette was away, Hayes, with some of his Kanakas, made a night foray against the old native chief of Nukahiva and carried off his two girls, taking care not to show himself and to have his men address him loudly as "Pete" or "Captain Baudette." Then he locked the girls in Baudette's empty hut, pulled back to his ship and peacefully awaited events. When the old chief and his war-party arrived on the beach the screams of the girls at once led him to the Frenchman's hut, and when the innocent Baudette returned he found his station in flames and his trade-prospects in Nukahiva forever ruined. When he landed, the natives burned his sloop behind him and made sincere efforts to knock his head in, but he escaped by swimming out to Hayes' ship. And Hayes, with the rough generosity he often displayed toward a defeated rival, put the ruined Frenchman in charge of one of his stations, giving Baudette a chance to get on his feet again.

One other thing Captain Dingle says:

The one man in the world who can tell of that notorious human mystery is Louis Becke. What he doesn't know about Hayes is hardly worth bothering about, and if he doesn't know what was the ultimate end of Bully, it is more than doubtful if any one really does know.

Now something from W. M. Davis, writing from Chico, New Mexico:

There is one man living who I believe knows all there is to know about Hayes, who, by the way, had his good points. His name is Louis Becke. For over forty years Becke has been trading among the islands. I was mate with him for five years and spent many delightful hours trying to pump the history of Bully Hayes out of him.

He told me many tales on the subject of Hayes and his schooner *Lorita*. Some were familiar, others new. But never would he tell me or any one else the vital ones. The question is, Does he know? I believe he does. Perhaps you could persuade him to tell you.

And a bit out of another letter from Mr. Davis:

There is a very strong feeling among men who knew him out there that, after he disappeared, he sailed and was lost in the *Lorita* on Christmas Island, south of Java. I know a man who swears he saw him after he was supposed to be dead. This man says Hayes lived for years on this island, which, as you know, is a long way from his old haunts.

The following Mr. Davis got direct from Alexander Maxwell, of Cairns, North Queensland, Government (Recruiting) Agent for North Queensland in the '80's.

That Hayes had at this time two vessels, *Leonora* and *Lorita*, is pretty generally believed by men in those parts who sailed among the islands, although at the time no one, outside his crew, knew he owned *Lorita*. His poaching and other depredations kept him in continual trouble, and he had a gunboat at his heels most of the time. He kept *Leonora* openly in the only good harbor in Buka, Queen Carola,

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while *Lorita* was hidden in a small lagoon on the other side of the island. This lagoon was "tabu," which accounts for her not being discovered by the natives.

Hayes on *Leonora* would pretend to evade the gunboat and slip out quietly at night; he would then sail around the island and be picked up by a small boat from *Lorita*. *Leonora*, followed by the gunboat, would continue on her way, without Hayes, doing a legitimate trading business. The authorities of course would hear of the different ports at which the *Leonora* had called and on her return examine her papers, proving she had been where reported.

Meanwhile Hayes on *Lorita* would be free to poach and sell arms to the natives. On some prearranged date and spot at sea he would meet *Leonora*, put *Lorita's* cargo on her and sail her himself to some Queensland port where he could sell both cargoes without danger. Often he sold the shell openly. *Lorita* meanwhile was safely back in her lagoon with only three or four men to watch her.

NOW as to his supposed death. I have good reasons for believing what follows, and that he arranged it all directly after he killed old King Khorai for informing on him. He and his two vessels were compelled to seek new waters lest he be taken and hanged for murder. After he had done for poor old Khorai, he hurried back to Buka, arranged for *Lorita* to sail immediately for Makassar Strait (between Borneo and Celebes), lay up at one of the numerous islands and keep a sharp lookout nights for *Leonora*, which he would blow up as she passed the island.

This plan was known only to himself and the captain of *Lorita*. Hayes realized he had reached the end as Hayes, and staged the entire affair even to the pursuing gunboat. He ran great risk by making sure a Dutch man-o'-war should be chasing him so they might see the end and report him either drowned or killed by the explosion. It was a frightful thing to do, to sacrifice all but two of his crew so that he might save himself, but very like Bully Hayes.

HERE it is; believe it or not, you will find many to agree with you. Hayes on *Leonora* sailing south through the Straits of Makassar is closely pressed by a Dutch cruiser who fires an occasional shot at him. *Lorita*, unknown to the Dutch and with nothing against her reputation, stands out from one of the Lagan Islands. They exchange signals, the Dutchman firing a half mile or so astern. Suddenly a terrific explosion lights up the night, leaving only a burning hulk, slowly sinking below the waves. Only two seamen were saved, and their testimony, backed by the reports of the Dutch officers, convinced the world that Hayes had died with the rest of the unfortunate crew.

Without doubt Hayes laid a fuse to the powder-magazine, lighted it and dropped overboard to be picked up by *Lorita's* small-boat. He then set sail for Christmas Island, where Mr. Maxwell swears he saw him ten years later, while he, Mr. Maxwell, was hunting for guano-beds.

For all we *know*, he may still be alive; men of his physique and type live a long time.

*(To be concluded at next Camp-Fire.)*

# LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relatives Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

JACK J. DALTON, last heard of in the Northwest, formerly of South Louisiana, South America, the islands and the West. Advise of important news of Tehualtepec Mine, Paraguay.—Address J. C. EASTMAN, Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Can.

J. L. F. Grandparents are sick. Come home; you're welcome. No questions asked. Madeline mourns for you and prays, "God bring papa home to me." Your support is needed for two babies.—Address BLANCHE, L. T. 234.

BOYS who served in the Army, Navy or Marine Corps in the China Relief Expedition of 1900 and 1901, write.—Address GEO. C. WRENN, 3202 35th Ave., Oakland, Cal.

*Please notify us at once when you have found your man.*

JAMES ALEXANDER GOODWIN, my son. Served in Co. K, 36th U. S. Vol. Inf.; in 1901 was in U. S. Cav.; was interested in Alaskan mines.—Address MRS. SARAH GOODWIN, 519 11th St., Sacramento, Calif.

CHARLES H. BLANKMAN. Last heard from, July, 1903, working in D. L. & W. machine-shops at Buffalo, N. Y., and boarding at 144 Swan St. Present age 40; light complexion, brown hair, blue eyes; height about 5 ft. 10 in.—Address MRS. L. BLANKMAN, 116 Harrison Ave., Endicott, N. Y.

"BOB" HAYES, one time with Universal Film Company; Hollis Bach, once of Colorado Springs, later of Long Beach, Calif., write.—Address No. L. T. 232.

BRUCE LAKE, my brother. Last heard of August, 1910, was working for Pacific Coast Construction Co., Camp No. 8, at Cleone, Ore.—Address PEARL LAKE, St. Paul, Kan.

*Please notify us at once when you have found your man.*

PARTNERS, Roy and Harry Hinckley.—Address W. BARRY KANE, Post-Office, Chocolate Bayou, Tex.

FATHER, Alston O. Cuyler, formerly of Medicine Hat, Alberta, Can.; last heard from at Vancouver, B. C., in 1904. Aged 55; 5 ft. 6 in.; red hair and mustache. Also mother, Mrs. Lauretta Rickard (remarried); last heard from at Edmonton about 1900.—Address MRS. CHARLOTTE A. RODGERS, Hotel Lenox, Tacoma, Wash.

J. HOWARD COOPER, who left Savannah, Dec., 1912, for southern Florida points.—Address ALLAN MINA, Buffalo, N. Y.

MERLE, Eugene, and T. G. Leigh. Were in Washington State about 17 years ago; went East later.—Address No. L. T. 235.

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JAMES FEENEY, my son. Age 20. First joint of right thumb missing; scars on ankle.—Address MRS. FEENEY, 400 W. 47th St., New York.

CHARLES FENTON, my uncle. Engineer. Last address Toronto.—Address ALICE PERSSE, care EDMUND S. CLOAK, 85 Willow Ave., Moose Jaw, Sask., Canada.

JNO. F. COATES, of Colorado, Ohio. Served in Spanish-American War, Inventor of Smoke Consumer.—Address C. B. L., care of ADVENTURE.

CUMLEY. Any one of this name write.—Address J. W. CUMLEY, 920 Parallel St., Atchison, Kans.

JACK ATHERTON, write.—Address C. HARRY RAYMOND, 237 N. Pittsburgh St., Connellsville, Pa.

FRANCIS BASIL SMITH, No. 17 Troop, South African Constabulary and to Troop 9. Later with a Government Railway survey, South Africa.—Address W. S. KEITH, 507-8 Railway Exchange Bldg., Portland, Ore.

*Please notify us at once when you have found your man.*

MICHAEL MURRAY, my father, late of Tralee, Ireland; married to Barbara Oates, daughter of George Oates, late of Gibraltar. Worked at Gibraltar in the seventies; heard of in New Orleans about 1906.—Address GEORGE HARRISON MURRAY, Box 410, Pretoria, South Africa.

CHARLES McLAY, my brother. He left Glasgow, Scotland, about 1903; settled on 640 acres at Plainview, Yorktown, Assiniboia, Canada.—Address JOHN J. MCLAY, 5810 Lexington Ave., Cleveland, O.

FOLLOWING members of Harvard, '99: Francis V. Alexandie, John J. Colbert, Thornton S. Hardy, Charles McKey, Thomas S. R. Nelson, Walter J. Orlone, James M. Rogers, Jr., Ralph Slye, Harry St. C. Smith, Thomas H. Stack, William C. Thompson.—Address ARTHUR ADAMS, Class Secretary, Room 615, 7 Water Street, Boston, Mass.

ANDREW RICE, of Bath County, Kentucky. Went to California in the gold rush in the early "forties." Last heard from in San Francisco.—Address CHARLIE HILL, Box 582, Richwood, West Virginia.

FRANK E. TIMMANUS of Baltimore, Buluwayo, S. A.; and Makirikiri, New Zealand. Also H. Litchfield of Palmerston, North N. Z., late of N. Z. M. R.—Address A. H. GRICOURT, Box 472, Denver, Colo.

JOSEPH BENS, called "Jupp," of Berlin Garde, Feld-Artillerie; butcher; ship's cook. Last heard from in Constantinople.—Address FRITZ KLOECK, Prince Albert, Sask., Canada.

RICHARD THOMAS NUGENT. One arm injured. Last heard of in North Dakota. Supposed to be mining in Montana.—Address his sister, MARY NUGENT JENKINS, Elk City, Okla.

HOWARD PEPPER, last heard from in Mountain Home, Ore. Prospector and miner. With Teddy's Rough Riders in Cuba. In the Thunder Mountain Field in Idaho about ten years ago, interested in the Copper King mine. Was deputy sheriff of Washington County, Idaho. About 40; 6 ft.; weighs about 190 pounds. Sandy hair; walks with slight limp.—Address his brother, WADE PEPPER, 2108 Chapline St., Wheeling, W. Va.

*Please notify us at once when you have found your man.*

WM. T. COTLER sailed from Liverpool in 1890 on Lake Fisher, Merchantman, bound for Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. Also Mrs. E. Drullard, last address New York.—Address MRS. L. CALAMARI, Gen. Del., New York City.

SHIRLEY M. PHILLPOT, discharged from Co. C, 15th Inf., Fort Huschuca, Ariz., Dec. 12th, 1897, as first sergeant. Also Edward O'Flaherty, discharged from Co.D, 16th Inf., Huntsville, Ala., as sergeant, Nov. 5, 1898.—Address WM. MCCARVER, Lock Box 5, Tillar, Ark.

EDDIE ADAMS of Fresno, Mariesville, Seattle, Vancouver, B. C., La Grand, etc. Last heard El Centro, Cal. Knife-cut above left knee; short; works at sign-writing..—Address H. ("EDDIE") VEITH, El Centro, Cal.

HARRY ELLIS. Last heard from in Los Angeles.—Address C. D. NELSON, Woodsville, N. H.

JACK HART, baker, formerly 5th U. S. Cav.—Address KARL BUHLER, 721 Folsom St., San Francisco.

JOHN HARDY, of Kansas City and Omaha. Last heard from in El Paso and reported going down into Mexico.—Address M. R. HARVELL, 134 Austin St., Cambridge, Mass.

BOATSWAIN'S MATE HOLYOKE; also Slim Lawler. Were in the Seymour Relief Expedition with me during the Boxer uprising in June, 1900.—Address BURKE HANFORD, 323 E. Myrtle St., Hanford, Cal.

GEN. CLIFF SANDS, and members of his proposed expedition.—Address H. MILLER, Orcutt, Cal.

GEORGE W. LIGHTHOWLER, formerly lance corporal in B. Sqn., 6th Inniskillings Dragoons, Mhow, Central India.—Address F. C. HOWES, R. N. W. M. Police, Arcola, Sask., Canada.

JOHN THOMSON, Corporal of the 2nd Troop of E, Squadron 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles. We both took our discharges in South Africa after the close of the war; parted at Johannesburg, July, 1902. When last heard of he was engaged on the Cape-to-Cairo Railway.—Address WILLIAM A. STEWART ("Scotty"), 480 Notre Dame Ave., Winnipeg, Canada.

DAN McCARTHY, of Cape Town Fire Dept.; rigger on Victoria Falls Bridge, Nyanza.—Address L. T. 236.

FRANK F. FULLMER, seen last in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada, 1911. He left for Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. I was going by the name of Robert C. Beaumont.

Also R. C. Byers, last heard of in Moose Jaw.—Address S. R. BEVIER, Jackson, Mich.

MICHAEL NOLAN, born in Kilkenny, Ireland.—Address J. M. NOLAN, 22 South 6th St., New Bedford. Mass.

BROTHER, Karol Fedoroski, aged 17; came to America Jan. 1911, from Teofipol, Wolynski, Guberni.—Address SEVERYNA FEDEROSKA, care Mrs. Wright Kramer, Graham Ave., Hempstead, L. I., N. Y.

*Please notify us at once when you have found your man.*

MISS WINNIEFRED NELDA, Francis Wilson and their father. Mr. Wilson worked for the Mexican Central R. R.

Also "Guy" Davis, youth of about eighteen. The party was last heard of in Victoria, Tamaulipas, Mexico, about November, 1901.—Address FRANK H. STORMS, 2809 Travis Avenue, Fort Worth, Texas.

BROTHER, James B. Young. Mother died; he is named in will.—Address WALTER YOUNG, 330 W. 46th St., New York.

DICK WOOLER, your fellow passenger in 1906 to West Indies.—Address M. G. H. 322 West 11th St., Jacksonville, Fla.

MRS. MAUDE BAKER, my mother. Left Dallas, Tex., in 1900 for Silver City, N. M.—Address No. L. T. 228.

NUMBERS 56, 73, 76, W 93, W 107, W 140, W 150, W 153, W 183, W 184, W 189, W 212, W 215, C 189, C 198, C 205, L. T. 207. Please send us your present addresses. Letters forwarded to you at addresses given us don't reach you.—Address A. S. HOFFMAN, care ADVENTURE.

THE following have been inquired for in full in the June and July issues of ADVENTURE. They can get name of inquirer from this magazine.

Inquiries will be printed three times. In the January and July issues all unfound back names will be printed again:

ARHENS, HELEN BRECKENRIDGE; Black, Ben, alias "Big Ben," cattleman; Brooms, Anthony, trapper; Burns, William, in Eldorado in 1904-'06; Ewell, Leighton; Heron, George A., of U. S. S. *Vermont;* Hoffman, Clint, stowaway, *Closeburn;* Keeney, George A., bad scar over left eye; Lassen, Capt. Lorenz; Maddox, John F.; McIntyre, J. J., of Brandon, Man.; Reitmeir, Charley; Robertson,

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Charlie, mulatto, birth-mark on one cheek; Sabin, Carl; and Steele, Clayton, both late of U. S. Navy; Seaman, Charles Lovett; Seigel, "Dutch"; Servin, Martin; Van Auker, Caesar.

MISCELLANEOUS. Comrades on *Culzean*, also Troop K, 6th U. S. Cavalry, in Apache campaigns, 1881 to 1886; men with U. S. forces during China Relief Expedition of 1900.

MANUSCRIPTS sent us by the following are being held by us, having been returned as unclaimed at the addresses furnished:

Frederick Barbour Moore, W. Lynch, Trenton, N. J.; W. Mack, Pacheca, Mexico; Henry W. Edwards, New York; W. G. Gormley, Ontario, Canada; George Stillions, Chicago, Ill.; Francis Manston, Chicago, Cal.; Charles E. Mack, New York.

WILLIAM C. SHAW, please send us your present address. Mail sent you at address given us doesn't reach you.—Address A. S. HOFFMAN, care ADVENTURE.

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

AS ANNOUNCED in the July issue, every item hereafter will be published three times, then taken out. But in the *January* and *July* numbers of each year we will publish the names of all who have been inquired for and remain unfound.

# WANTED —MEN

NOTE.—We offer this corner of the Camp-Fire, free of charge, to our readers. Naturally we can not vouch for any of the letters, the writers thereof, or any of the claims set forth therein, beyond the fact that we receive and publish these letters in good faith. We reserve the privilege of not publishing any letters or parts of a letter. Any inquiry for men sent to this magazine will be considered as intended for publication, at our discretion, in this department, with all names and addresses given therein printed in full, unless such inquiry contains contrary instructions. In the latter case we reserve the right to substitute for real names any numbers or other names. We are ready to forward mail through this office, but assume no responsibility therefor. **N.B.—Items asking for money rather than men will not be published.**

I KNOW of good high-grade ground, and I got to pitch in and make another couple of hundred thousand. I prospected this ground on a hunting-trip for caribou not far from Caribou Crossing on the Yukon River, between 80 and 100 miles below Dawson.

I did not have the proper tools to do much, but the gold is there all right. I dug out on rimrock in 1½ days over 4½ ounces fine yellow gold at $18 per ounce. Now that is going some. The 15 or more claims which can be sluiced into the main creek should shovel out 1000 ounces per day.

They have made very rich discoveries not far from there lately. The new Alaska R. R. will be built not far from there, and with good men to help me locate all that ground we will be sure winners.

To get in touch with 6 likely unmarried men and a good camp cook, I am writing this for. I have close to $2,000 to spend, and they should contribute their share *pro rata* toward transportation, outfit, tools, prospecting drilling outfit (which makes prospecting easy to bedrock) and freight-expense.

It will require all of $500 per man for suitable clothing, blankets and half a ton of grub of all kinds per man. We take no hotel along, and the men must leave the whisky-bottle alone, not quarrel, and have patience. The Yukon River is a trying country, and none but thoroughbreds can stand it; but if some men not under 25 and not over 40 years will correspond with me, I will tell them all about it.

I will pay the expenses for the cook, because I never knew a cook yet who could accumulate any money. I might get in touch with a first-rate man, a good worker, and if he has no money or can not raise any, maybe one of the parties who reads this item and can not go himself would like to grubstake him, or a few could club together and do so.

If I get a good bunch of men who will promise not to worry the life out of me with foolish questions and be true to me for two years, they would never have to worry about the bread-and-butter question again.

I have spent fifteen of the best years of my life in the Yukon and am not sorry for it. I managed to have a glorious time and as long as I have a dollar you don't need to ask me twice if you need one. I am glad to fork it over, too, quick. Now let us get in touch with each other; maybe we can make a bargain.—Address RICHARD W. LOWE, P. O. Box 347, San Francisco, Cal.

### *Inquiries for opportunities instead of men are NOT printed in this department.*

HAVE berths for two men on yacht going to S. E. Alaska on a hunting, prospecting and trapping expedition. Will hunt sea-otter and fish for salmon in Pacific. Will trap fur-bearing animals during Winter; prospecting and bear-hunting Spring following. Trip to last about a year.

Prefer young men that understand something about trapping and handling boats. We own sea-going yacht, open launches, etc. Been on this coast for twenty years.

Object, to make money, see country and have good time while doing it. This is no get-rich-quick scheme, but a reasonable profit may be expected.

Do not answer this unless you come in on partnership basis.—Address CAPT. F. L. BOOTH, Raymond, Wash.

WANT one or two fellows to go trapping, hunting and adventuring in the South or southwestern California or any other Southern State. Would look for lead, zinc or oil-claims, or an odd turn of the hand. Just to make an honest living, and some beside if possible.

Have been through the mill from the lumber-fields of Indiana to Canada, and Canada, too; all through the North except Michigan.

Am 5 ft. 11¾ in., stripped. Weigh 165; not an ounce of fat. Aged 20. Can handle a .32 special Winchester with good effect. Can ride a little, but am no broncho-buster. Can herd sheep, etc., trap, hunt, fish and am a good fisherman. Would like a trip down to Florida, hunting pearls or oyster-fishing off Florida.—Address ROBERT EPPS, care H. H. TIEMAN, Ventura, Ia.

### *Inquiries for opportunities instead of men are NOT printed in this department.*

WILL make 3,000-mile trip through the Rockies; Denver the home office; thence through Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, Washington; south through Washington, Oregon, California; east through Nevada, Arizona; north through Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado to Denver.

Will prospect and hunt and thoroughly explore about five miles wide. Will take moving-pictures where possible, a continuous panoramic photo of the mountains. Will need men who can fill one or more of the following positions; all first-class, sober and congenial: an assayer, a civil engineer, a taxidermist, a story-writer, a hunter and trapper, an all-round camera man; and a lady to be company for my wife. Each member must have outfit and about $300 to insure a successful start. The trip will be self-supporting.— Address FRANK SPENCER, President, Marbleized Cement Co., Miami, Fla.

YOUNG man who understands photography to take trip with me by canoe from Lake Itasca, Minn., to New Orleans.—Address GLENN WILLITS, Grand Rapids, Minn.

KNOW of several outfits projected for adventure, profit, etc., due to get off this year. Would like to hear from any men who are looking for openings of any sort.

No connection directly with anything previously advertised here or projected, and no fees connected. All communications confidential, and will be acknowledged.

Give age, weight, nationality, experience, languages, resources, and best line of business.—Address W 237.

MAN with good auto to go with me on pathfinder trip across United States, starting from New York State or Pennsylvania. Object, to find best ways to travel in 1915 to Exposition. Want to travel slowly so as to lecture and advertise. Trip will pay own expenses, but lecture outfit, camp outfit and auto must be provided by us two.—No. W 230.

HALF a dozen ladies, twenty-five to thirty years, to join walking-party leaving Grand Rapids, Mich., latter part of August. Object-point, San Francisco Exposition in 1915. Must be of good repute, able to stand some hardship and willing to hustle for expenses.—Address No. W 229.

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# THE TRAIL AHEAD

*For the benefit of those of our readers who want to know in advance what stories are coming to them in ADVENTURE we set aside this last page of the magazine.*

OUR readers come from all walks of life—explorers, college professors, soldiers, physicians, judges, Congressmen, sailors, clerks, ranchmen, ministers, wanderers, business men and all the rest—a wide range. Our job is to publish stories that have action and a punch in them, yet are clean and so well written that not even the hyper-educated can find them trashy. To publish stories with real, live people in them instead of dummies, with real local color instead of inaccurate guesswork, stories written in finished style, yet stories that are so clear and simple in the telling that no one can fail to grasp every atom of them.

No two magazines aim at exactly the same field. In so far as the above is concerned, probably the magazine whose aims most closely coincide with ADVENTURE'S is the *Saturday Evening Post*. Some of the writers are the same in both. Both keep clean, both appeal to the same wide range of readers, both strive to have their fiction characters real people instead of dummies and their local color true to life instead of imaginary. Most of all, both aim at the difficult combination of simplicity and finished workmanship.

Each, of course, prints types of stories the other does not, and each has accepted what the other has rejected; but also each has stories which, if you shut your eyes and disassociate the stories from the magazine in which you read them, will be found to fit perfectly in the other. Try the experiment and see.

I MAKE no bones over saying I regard this similarity as complimentary to ADVENTURE. The *Saturday Evening Post* is one of the best and biggest magazines in the world. You can very easily twist my words into a loud and empty boast, but take what I say at its exact value and I think you'll agree with me. And this is what led me to speak at all:

Over and over and over again, thousands of times, we get letters from new readers of ADVENTURE, or from old readers who have introduced new readers to it, telling of one more man who had been passing ADVENTURE by as merely one of a group of "popular" magazines in which he had no interest whatever, but who had finally picked up a copy, read it and become at once an enthusiastic "rooter." He would have read the same stories in the *Saturday Evening Post* and enjoyed them, but it had never even occurred to him to look for stories of this kind in that (to him) unfamiliar and unexamined magazine called ADVENTURE.

These are the people who keep our circulation growing, of course. But sometimes I wish I could wave a magic wand and make all the strangers to ADVENTURE read it just once *at* once. Then they wouldn't have to voice any regrets that they hadn't examined it before, and our circulation would multiply itself.

NOW about the following? There are hundreds and hundreds of you for whom I've done favors during the past three or four years. Never a week passes that some of you don't come in or write in for advice, information or assistance (I don't mean charity or financial aid). Many of these I know only by their letters and have never seen. Most of this time I've worked nights and Sundays, but I've always done my darnedest to help you when I could. I've helped you toward jobs, forwarded or held mail for you, visited you in hospitals, written to you when you were lonely in far places, given what advice or information I was able, helped you buck up when things were breaking bad, etc., etc., etc.

Most of it has been little enough. I know most of you would do even better by me. Many of you already have. And there have been no strings tied to what little I did.

BUT I'm going to ask a favor of all of you. If you don't feel like complying, that's your business entirely, and I'll be no less ready to do something in future for you if I can.

This is it: When you find a fellow who has never looked inside ADVENTURE, get him to take that look. Give, lend, buy him a copy, or get him to get a copy and read it. That's all. Merely introduce him to it and let him form his own opinion. Will you do it? No? All right. Yes? Thanks!

Now for a look ahead at some of the things in the September number.—A. S. H.

**DICK ANTHONY OF ARRAN** *By Talbot Mundy*
Being his first real adventure in the series of events that lead on to tremendous things. Complete novelette.

**THE SNOW-BURNER** *By Henry Oyen*
Complete novel—a strong tale of the North.

**STOLEN SIGNALS—A Baseball Story** *By Hugh S. Fullerton*

**ARSÈNE LUPIN—AND THE TIGER'S TEETH** *By Maurice Leblanc*
The second part of this amazing detective story is even more exciting than the first.

**COME-ON CHARLEY AND A JEWEL,** *By Thomas Addison*
Another chance to meet *Come-On Charley, Percival Teeters*, et al.

**RUNNING A CARGO** *By Frederick William Wallace*
One of the author's famous tales of the deep-sea fishermen.

**THE BLACK SHAME OF THE SOUTH IRISH** *By W. Townend*
The tale of some Irish soldiers in India and Ireland. No Irishman should miss it.

**MR. POFFENBERGER and THE PRESS,** *By Herbert C. Test*
A fine chance to chuckle.

**"THAT'S BUSINESS!"** *By John Amid*
A story for business men and Westerners and people.

**IVANOFF GOES TO SEA** *By George Shepherd*
Another stirring adventure of the horse Gunpowder.

***And Others! And Others! And Others!***

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The Untrained Man

The Trained Man

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| Architect | Lettering & Sign Painting |
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# *Finish This Story for Yourself—*

The girl got $6 a week and was lonely. "Piggy"—you can imagine his kind—was waiting downstairs. He knew where champagne and music could be had But that night she didn't go. That was Lord Kitchener's doing. But another night?

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tells about it in this story, with that full knowledge of women, with that frank facing of sex, and that clean mind that have endeared him to the men and women of the land

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